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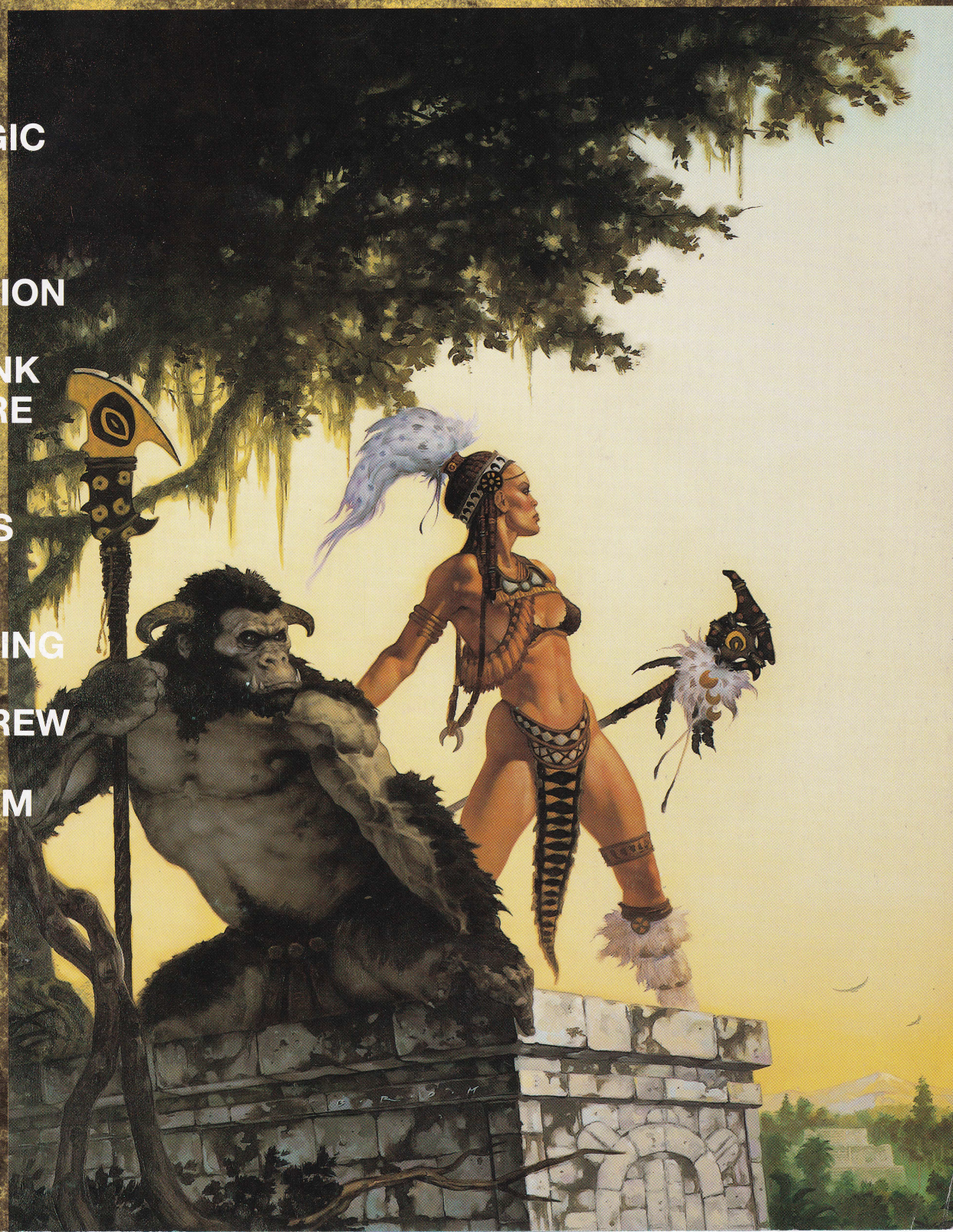
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Australian Realms

The Role-Playing Supplement

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Contents

SPECIAL FEATURE

- 21 CARD MAGIC ISSUE #1**
Collectible Trading Card Games Magazine Supplement.

SCENARIO FEATURE

- 14 FIRE AND ICE**
Cyberpunk 2020/Cybergeneration adventure set in Antarctica!
By Jonathan A. Spear

SUPPLEMENT FEATURES

- 8 THE SALDAEN WAY**
Unae's halflings struggle for freedom against the Heletian oppressors.
By Colin Taber
- 10 THE MARAN STATES**
More important Unae campaign source material.
By Colin Taber
- 28 WOMEN OF THE HIGH SEAS**
Another in our series on the role of women in history and role-playing.
By Louise Pieper and Tonia Walden
- 33 TO THE VILLAGE BORN**
Historical perspectives bringing the medieval village to life in your game.
By Brad Martin
- 39 BLANK FRANK**
An NPC Hook for White Wolf's Mage: The Ascension storyteller game.
By Scott English
- 40 BRIDGE CREW**
A look at an Australian-designed computer assisted role-playing tool.
By David Readman

REGULAR FEATURES

- 2 EDITORIAL**
- 2 LETTERS**
- 4 REVIEWS**
- 36 THE ANALYTICAL ENGINE**
- 42 THE ADVENTURES OF THE A-TEAM**
- 44 NEWS**

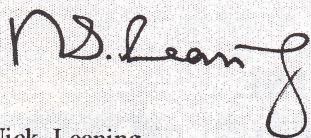
Editorial Letters

Many role-players I talk to are concerned about the **PROBLEM** our hobby faces at the moment with the hugely popular collectible trading-card games like Magic: The Gathering and Illuminati: New World Order diverting attention away from role-playing.

I agree that in the short term these games are having a negative effect on "traditional" role-playing (the RPG spend is going into cards right now), but the long term effect will be very positive if we gamers manage things properly. Card games *have* stopped a lot of people role-playing (for now) but also many thousands of the people playing collectible trading card games who'd never before stepped inside a hobby shop, or heard of role-playing games, or joined a gaming club, or attended a convention have now done so. More people than ever before have become exposed to core role-playing concepts like game worlds, hit points, spells, playing a character (most card games have you take on a role be it wizard, vampire, or ship commander), joining clubs, haunting hobby stores, attending conventions, and regularly playing games as a hobby.

Every card player is a potential new role-player given the right pitch from the RPG companies, the hobby stores and us, the role-playing enthusiasts. Geez, see if Wizards Of The Coast don't know this - watch them bring out a Magic: The Gathering RPG quick smart.

Which is why in this issue we have launched *Card Magic*. By selling Australian Realms to card players we'll not only increase sales revenue so that I can shout the editorial team to more vindaloo and paratha, but we'll also be exposing a lot of card players to role-playing and using that **OPPORTUNITY** to expand and improve our precious hobby.



Nick Leaning.

Matthew Legge
Macquarie, ACT

Hello Guys,

I'd like to make some comments about your scenario feature in issue 21, "The Lonely Halls of Hra Kurban". I think you guys have got the right blend of the scenario and a how to article. The mix of the three styles was really well done.

I understand why you have presented the scenario with only a small amount of background but my preference (and only a preference mind you!) is to have a little more historic background to the published scenarios that I read. I find that gives a sense of mood and more story for further adventures down the track, and it is a bit easier to build a reasonable adventure for my players.

On the whole I think your magazine is of excellent quality. Keep up the good work.

Thanks, Matt. The "Lonely Halls" seems to have worked judging by the feedback we've had. We plan to run more of these "how to/scenario" combinations. We left the background flexible so that people could slot it into their games. For in-depth background, check out the Unae campaign.

Steve Durham
Bradbury, NSW

Dear Guys,

I've just read Realms issue 21 and once again have found myself entertained and informed. I must say I agree wholeheartedly with the article by Alan Ogden, "The Art of Combat". So many GM's tend to forget that the life forms with which they populate their games are supposed to be 'real' (in game terms). That means that they think, they feel and they plan. An army of orcs for example, wouldn't survive long if they employed a battle plan reminiscent of a pack of lemmings (Pack? Flock? Herd?) and yet that's exactly how many GM's run them. Even most pack and herd animals employ basic tactics. Wolves for instance will often launch feigned/abortive frontal assaults to divert attention from a surprise rear attack.

Tactics! That's what gives the edge in any conflict. If your creatures start to use them then your PC's will soon follow. When my PC's come through combat they really know that they've been in a life or death battle and they feel genuine satisfaction and even pride. (When they win, anyway). Even minor skirmishes become memorable when your adversary employs some cunning

tactic, especially if you can hit upon an answering manoeuvre which earns a deserved victory. So come on all you GM's out there, allow the creatures of your world the degree of intelligence or animal cunning that they are supposed to have; the desire and instincts necessary to survive in their environment; the cunning and determination to maintain their position on the food chain. Remember, they are fighting for their lives.

Steve, all fans of Alan's acclaimed "how to" series will be interested to hear that he's working on his next article (for issue 23) which looks at politics and intrigue.

Michael Wolfenden
@acslink.net.au

Nick,

Are you there? I have sent email before today and no reply. Don't tell me the wild wild karri forest has bemused your senses!

When I was first introduced to the hobby in 1975 I was in Grade 7 at school and went to a local event at the Sugar Festival in Bundaberg. It was a Wargaming Booth. Up until then I was a World War II fanatic. I had books & books on it. To actually replay some of these battles just thrilled me to pieces, I was hooked. I went to High School next year and joined the Club.

The Club was run by an American teacher who had bought all these wonderful wargames with him. We found Chainmail then D&D and then AD&D. I then went on to RQII and was hooked on it. Never to see AD&D again. I was the Games Master during this time and I hated the Hit Points concept. Once the player reached certain higher levels you had to get bigger monsters to combat them, eventually I used NPC's. Human's make the worst monsters in that game by far. And just as the regulars were getting sick of it, Runequest came along and while I don't play in Glorantha, the games system is excellent. Combat is always dangerous, and time consuming, both of which encourage other methods of resolution.

In reply to "The Lonely Halls of Hra Kurban" my preference is for strong characterisation of characters/locations with plots and sub-plots linking them if within the one location; ie ADAM's characters/locations interwoven more fully with COLIN's storyline's and subplots. The reason, you can relocate the adventure much more easily. The "tuffness" of the NPC's can be adjusted to the strength of the Player Characters. The locations can be placed anywhere within a campaign world. Every world ever published or unpublished has a "Moria"-like rip-off, we have all read Tolkien and been impressed. It is also easier to prepare for, you don't need to worry to much about room descriptions etc. The

adventure is modular (sorry the programming side of me escaped); small digestible parts for GM and players alike. The down side to this approach is that you have to be alert (if the GM) and catch and use any inspiration that just happens!

LEE's method would be required for newer GM's which don't have much adlib experience under their belt. They would need the support of the detailed descriptions so that things like horses needing food and water can be shown and rationalised. Experienced GM's know this and would just place the stables in an appropriate location, provide for food etc. Always difficult in a Dungeon setting. Mushroom farms were always popular with me.

That's enough for now, hope I didn't send you to sleep!

Michael, an editor never sleeps.

Mark Arsenault

Gold Rush Games, PO Box 2531,
Elk Grove, CA 95759-2531, U.S.A.

Dear Nick,

I've finally had a chance to really get into the issues. I have to say that my favourite part of either issue was the article "The Art of Combat." Oh my gosh, that piece was outstanding, IMO! I only wish he

could have written it for TGC!

One of the most exciting aspects of AR, from my point of view, is the "feel" for the Aussie gamers and their love of the hobby. The language is different and distinct enough to make it foreign yet familiar. The manner of speech, slang terms, expressions... I love all of it! There's an amazing amount that our gamers could learn from each other. It'd be interesting to see how cultural differences influence gaming style, both playing and GM'ing, plot and storylines, attitudes toward combat and social encounters, and so on. In short, I'd love to play in one of your games (assuming your crew didn't throw me out for being too "American." <Grin>).

About my only exposure to Australians has been from movies like Gallipoli, The Odd Angry Shot and Mad Max, and a few Australian military folks I've encountered during my stint in the US Air Force. Not good stereotypes, necessarily, I know. Of course, my main exposure to English folk has been working with the Brits in Desert Storm and watching Monty Python, which weren't altogether different...

I'm thinking about doing capsule reviews of different gaming publications, and if I do I'll definitely be including Australian Realms. Your mag is among the top 10 gaming mags -- period -- in my book.

Now that I think of it, I'd love to

publish some material from your readers, or even from Alan Ogden (now that would be a treat!). Any chance you could make such an announcement in your next issue? Something along the lines of "American magazine craves foreign aid!"

Keep up the good work, Nick.

Mark, we'd love to have you play a game set in Australia's most popular game world - Unae. You and all your fellow American gamers. And we promise you will, you will...

Matt Tolley

@marlin.jcu.edu.au

Dear Nick,

Congratulations on another fine issue - the swing towards a general gaming platform and the 'How To' type of article have pushed Realms beyond all competitors. The spider on the bridge, the mad dwarf and those nice Cult of Morti people have all found a place in my generic fantasy campaign, while the Red Death and the Doom Dog are set to reduce my Cthuluists to slobbering foetal wrecks.

Goodonya, Matt. And we've loads more scary stuff coming up from our great team of writers. Players whose referees buy Realms: Be afraid, be very afraid. Chuckle. ■

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RE VIEWS

SOLO OF FORTUNE 2

Cyberpunk 2020 Supplement
By R.Talsorian Games
Reviewed by Paul Mitting

This is another well-written supplement for Cyberpunk 2020, in the format of a *Soldier of Fortune* style magazine. The technique was used before with *Solo of Fortune 1*, apparently one of the best ever selling supplements for Cyberpunk.

This new edition is larger and even better produced. You get 96 pages of good to excellent artwork supporting magazine style text. Interspersed are "adverts" for new weapons and products, and the necessary game data to use them. Of especial interest to the power gamer are new borg weapons and the new battlefield armoured vehicles.

It is interesting that R.Talsorian Games have included "articles" that both discourage and encourage the use of high-powered weapons and cybergear. I'm left wondering what message are they trying to push? Cyberpunk in print has largely become a game of arms proliferation, moving away from story-strong plotlines to high-tech shoot-em-ups. Although it is up to referees and players to decide which way they want to play the game; ultimately RTG have the responsibility for writing up this arms race.

Gaming dogma aside, *Solo of Fortune 2* provides very good coverage of the latest gear for players and NPC's to waste decaying suburbia with. I must confess that I was especially taken with the cyberleg vehicles. The sight of six-legged tanks with guns jutting from every angle has got to be the weirdest thing yet. Cyberforms (artificial constructs with animal/machine brains and bad attitude) are pretty impressive too, and should give even hardened Solos a nasty turn when they meet one.

One article that had potential but just missed is the "American Angels" - a rating of the ten top Solos in America. They give neat little histories, a picture and main attributes. What's missing is a run down of their skills and what levels they should be at. If the intent was to serve up some really mean encounters, where are the stats you need to run them? A good referee will just make them up themselves, but when behind buying a supplement you have a right to expect these fundamentals will be included.

Guaranteed to appeal to all Solos out there, *Soldier of Fortune 2* will be a great addition to any Cyberpunk's arsenal.

BUG CITY

Shadowrun Sourcebook
By FASA Corporation
Reviewed by Malcolm Adler

Bug City is a campaign setting for *Shadowrun*, the book is perhaps best described as an alternative forum for a different kind of shadow adventure.

The premise?

The city of Chicago has been quarantined, a barricade has gone up around the heart of the city, creating the CZ (the Containment Zone). Why? A spirit insect hive has just released its offspring, and in panic the UCAS military cook up wild stories about plague and disaster to cover the truth. Chicago's heart is now off limits.

In this setting of destruction, conflict and survival the desperate residents try to survive by defending themselves against the humanoid insect spirits and competing for the essentials of life.

The book comes in at 160 pages and is very well presented, to my way of thinking it is an exceedingly good product, delivering a new setting which is unique with a plausible (and the climax to the) Universal Brotherhood storyline.

Whether your players will be trying to get in as per a contract, or are inside trying to get out, it's all going to be hard work, and a different, dirtier more desperate kind of shadowrun.

With sections covering the history of Chicago, the City under siege, life in the CZ, information on the insect spirits and a GM's sections it comes in at good value. But then, any setting where a sub-tac nuke is triggered as a solution to a big problem is often an interesting spot for a visit.

Bug City is highly recommended for those looking for a change from the normal, everyday shadowruns. Within these walls you will be your own master, deciding your own fate. Challenging.

Welcome to the Windy City.

Welcome to oblivion.

YIN-SLOTH JUNGLES

Palladium RPG Book VII
By Palladium Books Inc
Reviewed by Andrew Daniels

Wondering about the truth of where humankind came from? Want to know more about the Battle of the gods? Fancy exploring the Great Fire Bog or the Orcish Empire? Then this book is for you!

Yin-Sloth Jungles is another in the seemingly endless harvest of quality products that has emerged from Kevin Siembieda's fertile team. This time the steaming jungles of Yin-Sloth are explored. Once again we are introduced to a heap of new and interesting occupational character classes (O.C.C's), monsters, places, villains and adventure hooks. This time, however, I was slightly disappointed that the flash of inspiration, the unique twist that so distinguishes Palladium's treatment most genres has gone missing here. Don't get me wrong - this book is crammed with useful and entertaining material, its just I didn't find the bizarre delights I've come to expect.

The Yin-Sloth Jungles are a nasty place. The peripheral details provided by the authors (Nowak and Siembieda) give the setting menace and depth. Alongside the primitive weaponry used in the various areas we have such regional delights as bogs and quagmires, poisonous plants and the exotic medical terrors faced by those bold enough to adventure in the Jungles.

My favourite new critter has to be the Corpse Creature: Lies in the road waiting, then leaps up to strangle its prey whilst rasping encouragement like "Die scum!"

Where *Yin-Sloth Jungles* is very strong is in the four scenarios presented at the end of the book. Each has a number of maps and a long list of keyed locales highlighted and described. Some need fleshing out by the GM, but then what else are GMs good for? These adventures are varied and interesting and each comes complete with a cast of supporting characters with descriptions and histories - excellent ingredients for a hot and sweaty *Palladium* campaign.

Palladium addicts will want this to keep up with the ever-expanding game world. Although I felt a little let down by the lack of originality, the treatment of this classic genre setting, with its echoes of Robert E. Howard, is both thorough and entertaining.

Value for money and recommended.

POOR WIZARD's ALMANAC III

AD&D Mystara Campaign Accessory
By TSR Inc
Reviewed by Lee Sheppard

For those who came in late...Mystara is a D&D campaign world that has recently been converted to an AD&D campaign setting, apparently much to the dismay of some of its many players who were stunned when the entire D&D product line was dropped in 1994. This volume therefore, while the third in the *Poor Wizard's Almanac* series, is actually the first to present the Mystara campaign setting in the AD&D rules format.

The world of Mystara is an interesting concept - a hollow planet with a second set of nations on the inside face of the planet,

Mystara is, in essence, two complete worlds. While two large entrances in the planets surface provide a gateway between the two worlds (called *Known World* and *Hollow World*, both highly creative titles if ever I've heard one), strong magical barriers effectively keep both campaign settings completely separate (yeah, right).

At 240 pages (approx A5 size), the **Poor Wizard's Almanac** provides a healthy read for GMs (players are discouraged from discovering its many secrets). There is certainly a wealth of information for GMs who might wish to base a campaign in this setting, although I seriously doubt that many GMs would get their players through more than a quarter of this sourcebook before the inevitable Volume IV comes out.

The Almanac is divided into three distinct sections, with the first detailing a geographic overview of both worlds and a Who's Who of the most important characters likely to be met or heard of. Each location and individual is well described, and many are illustrated or mapped for further reference. Section two unfortunately details such trivial details as weather predictions (haven't we outgrown this sort of stuff yet?), festivals and economics, so 30 pages are effectively wasted on this piffle.

Luckily, the final section is perhaps the most interesting concept of the whole book - a list of current events for the year AC 1012, the period covered by this volume. While this might at first seem particularly limited in scope, every location within the Mystara setting is provided with a number of events that will unfold throughout the year, with many providing adventure hooks for the players to get involved in. Most other events happen without the players' direct involvement, or even knowledge (perhaps a few too many of these), and are included to make Mystara a "moving, changing, living place" - an enviable pursuit.

For those GMs who don't have the time, desire or skill to develop their own campaign world in minute detail, then this product deserves a good, long look.

NEPHILIM GM's VEIL

Nephilim Game Accessory

By Chaosium Inc

Reviewed by Adam Whitt

As sure as night follows day, as sure as imitation follows innovation, as sure as a hot vindaloo follows final paste-up around here, so do referee screens flood the market three months or so after Gencon. Actually, I quite like referee screens - they are a good way to shield your personal supply of corn chips and salsa from greedy players, or to duck behind when a stray dice comes flying your way (about the only uses I can envisage for the recent spate of *player's* screens TSR have released). But let's get serious for a



while - screens do serve a useful purpose in chart-intensive, dice-driven games. Which is why I did not expect one for *Nephilim*. The mechanical guts of all Chaosium games is the "resistance table", a neat, simple and flexible engine that doesn't need to be set out in a table once you grasp the easily understood formula.

So what else is in the pack? Perhaps the most fun thing is the Astrological Modifier Wheel. Anyone remember the Combat Calculator TSR gave away in *Dragon* magazine many years ago? This is a similar, but much more colourful, game device used to calculate a random factor in spell casting linked to the current position of the constellations. Delicious game flavour.

Also included is a 16 page booklet featuring a complete weapons summary and the "Temple of the Ancients" scenario - written by a husband and wife team from Melbourne Australia so its bound to good! Actually, Judy and Liam Routt *have* done an excellent job of introducing the game concept in this adventure, by throwing the players in the deep end, and the water temperature is rising! The PC's are Nephilim who awaken from centuries long sleep in a perilous situation (you're about to be destroyed forever - do something), in an fascinating location (the British Museum at the turn of this century) in a mortal body not of their own choosing (Japanese tourist, Scottish workman, Oxford archeologist etc.) with a time constraint they are initially unaware of. Good hectic stuff.

The scenario and Astrological Wheel make this a worthwhile purchase, as for the screen - I can take it or leave it.

IMMORTAL PILOT PACK

Immortal: War of Ages Game Accessory

By Precendence Publishing Inc

Reviewed by Andrew Daniels

The **Immortal Pilot Pack** presents us with the ubiquitous GM's screen with all the necessary tables, a dozen full-colour character sheets (with the important sections printed in black with text reversed out in white for easy photocopying), and a short introductory adventure - the bog-standard RPG paraphernalia. All this looks fine; the screen is tri-fold in stiff card so that it should stand up OK and the layout is clear enough, the text competent and the few illustrations are good. Colour character sheets are kinda neat but add little to the role-playing experience the game designers are purported to be espousing. One very nice touch I appreciated was the "Player Briefing and Rules Overview" printed on the back of the character sheet. If someone could design a workable RPG where the whole rules set fitted comfortably on the back of a character sheet I'd buy it!

The adventure, *Project Looking Glass*, is written, or rather scripted, as a play with the players slowly awakening to the realities of being an Immortal. (The game designers have borrowed a lot of terminology from the theatre, presumably to promote the idea that

this game is in tune with the current trends of role-playing as interactive literature). The plot is no great shakes - a clash with a secret authority bent on controlling the player characters for their own nefarious purposes - but it does offer each player the chance to step into centre stage for a while enabling them to become acquainted with their character and various important game concepts and rules *before* being asked to fill out a character sheet. Role-playing is emphasised over rules and the atmosphere and tone of *Immortal* is quickly established.

Fits the bill but not a headliner.

MEDIA FRONT

Sourcebook for Cybergeneration

By R.Talsorian Games

Reviewed by Paul Mitting

This is the latest source material for the CyberGen game. It focuses on the collective Cyber-evolved groups that make up **MediaFront**. These groups are fighting the media war against ISA and its assorted evil offspring in 2027. The presentation is identical to that of CyberGen, which means easy to read and well illustrated.

In a nutshell, this supplement covers the history of media and its influence on America's cyberpunks. It updates the current situation in 2027, and gives a run down on the various nasty tricks that are being used to brainwash the populace. There is quite a bit of heavy-handed propaganda being served up through the Media, mostly anti-evolved and pro-Government. They even use subliminals in many broadcasts, getting you to love the ISA and turn in your kids when they go all twitchy.

I was stunned and disbelieving to note that this book has no new guns in it. There is a good section on media tools though - cameras, recording and editing equipment, transmitting gear. All the stuff a yoganger needs to broadcast their own message to the brain dead populace. Two new YoGangs are introduced here. There are the Lookers (high class fashion model types who have "The Look") and Taggers (high tech graffiti artists who spread their message across your walls).

A new variant of Cyber-evolution has become known. These are the Jammers, who have hexite ears and throats. Their abilities are pretty interesting, including being expert Audio Mimics, Echolocators (sound based radar/sonar), short range radio broadcasters and with a special attack mode called Sonic Stun. They fit right into the **MediaFront** setting of course. Damned clever that Carbon Plague.

For the GM, there is a section on how to run CyberGen games, especially the **MediaFront** aspect. Also included are some "Stupid Cybertricks" that the evolved can try. They're sort of like party tricks, but they can get your butt out of a tight situation.

The last third of the sourcebook is a media-orientated adventure called *Occult of Personality*. It answers some of the background questions that the Carbon Plague begs to have addressed. The adventure is entertaining and offers several alternative paths for the players to follow, depending on how they handle certain situations, which is welcome departure from the fairly rigid plot paths of some older adventures.

CyberGeneration is the 'put-away-your-smartlink-and-introduce-your-brain' game of 'punk role-playing in the dark future. **MediaFront** is a worthy addition to the game setting.

MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM

AD&D Accessory

By TSR Inc.

Reviewed by Lee Sheppard

This is apparently the first of what will be a regular series of annual updates for the *Monstrous Manual* (ie. the hard-backed, single bound volume version of the *Monstrous Compendiums*), with Volume One containing creatures that appeared in various TSR products throughout 1993.

Following the standard *Monstrous Manual* format, each creature is fully described, detailing statistics, combat method, special abilities, habitat and ecology. Perhaps the best feature of this supplement however is the fact that each creature is beautifully illustrated in full colour by Tony Di'Terlizzi, undoubtedly TSR's best illustrator at present.

Creatures for each of the main TSR lines are included, with creatures for Al-Qadim, Ravenloft and Dark Sun settings sharing equal space with the more traditional TSR "high fantasy" campaign settings. As with most products of this type, the quality of the creatures varies, but the majority are very useful indeed. Given that some of these creatures came from sources that some players may not have had access to, they should provide some challenging new opponents for GMs to use.

It turns out that one of my very *own* creations appears within its pages. Not that you'd have any idea that it actually *was* me that was responsible for creating the Snow Troll, as *none* of the original creators of the included creatures are acknowledged anywhere within the text. While this is just a minor sore point, it wouldn't have taken much effort to include a contents page specifying the creator of the monster, it's source (eg - did it come from a *Dungeon Magazine* scenario, providing a ready made adventure for GMs to use?) and the campaign setting that the creature was best suited for - the original *AD&D 1st Edition Fiend Folio* certainly had this feature, why not this one?

One final criticism, again a minor one. I personally preferred the original, loose-leaf,

three-holed version of the *Monstrous Compendium*, not this current perfect bound method. I found that it was much more convenient when it came to running sessions, as you could pick out just the creatures you needed for that evening (and thereby not have to lug two three-ringed binders everywhere you went) - almost like being able to create your own Magic: the Gathering deck of creatures (Aaaaarrggghhhh - wash your mouth out Lee!!).

INTERACTIVE FANTASY #2

The Journal of Role-Playing & Story-Telling

By Hogshead Publishing

Reviewed by Andrew Daniels

Not currently available in Australia, but worth a review if only to assess the capabilities of Hogshead Publishing who are about to reprint Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay (see this issue's News Page), *IF* is no mere gaming magazine, it is a journal!

IF is split into four sections. First up we have "Overviews". Here we find a look at some of the forms which interactive fiction and role-playing takes. This is followed by "Recreation" where "the writers take a serious look at games as they are...their development, their design, their potential and some of the issues that they raise". Some edifying stuff here, especially Costikyan's article on game design. The pick of the sections really, but onward to "Analysis". In this issue, this section is given over to teachers and educationalists to look at "interactive analysis" from a more theoretical perspective, such as using gaming in a classroom environment. The final section, "Reviews" is self-explanatory.

IF represents an interesting change in the perspective of gaming literature. It seeks to divorce itself from armour-plated heroes and snappy pictures of cyber-villians. In a hobby which has frequently struggled to take itself seriously, or indeed to be taken seriously by anyone else, *IF* is an attempt to look beyond the image of adults playing kiddie games. While some articles, such as "On the Vocabulary of Role-Playing", or "Role-Playing and Dyslexia", appear to be fatuous at best, others, such as "Crossing the Line", offer an fascinating outlook on the hobby's current hot coal, the plethora of occult-orientated games. *IF* is a valiant attempt to upscale gaming's image, to take it from the realms of childish pastime to a more adult arena and give perspective to the issues which face gamers once the initial glow of killing orcs has dimmed.

For all of its positive points however, methinks *IF* represents much intellectual ado about nothing; role-playing is primarily about having fun. It will be interesting to see if there are enough like-minded gamers out there to support such a dour product.

An engrossing and recommended read. ■



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THE SALDAEN WAY

THE STRUGGLE OF UNAE'S HALFLINGS TO RESTORE THEIR HOMELANDS

By Colin Taber.

Saldaen revolutionaries! Yes, a decade ago I too would have laughed at the idea. But the truth is often life's cruelest joke, and today such a wild truth fights for the survival of its people, culture and their very god against the colonial forces of the Heletians.

While the 'Little People', the 'Halflings' or as they call themselves; 'the Saldaens' seem a placid lot, their struggle for sovereignty from the forces of Lixus is one that may very well trigger a much larger battle. But, with so many wars being waged in Dormetia, who is to say what is merely part of another.

-Forwao, Elven Charlatan

THE GREEN PAST

Saldae (or, more correctly Heletian Saldae) is today the last outpost of the halfling race. These lush lands are ringed by barren deserts on three sides that are continually blasted by scorching winds. It is this natural barrier that has kept the nomad tribes of the south and other threats far from Saldae's undefended borders.

The Saldaens have a long and lonely history, a blessed isolation that has seen them build their own culture and land unmolested, until the coming of Heletian colonists from Lixus one hundred and twelve years ago. Such an easy, comfortable past has seen the Saldaens long become complacent - easy prey to the devious and powerful Lixans.

The one hope for a Saldae threatened by colonisation, is the 'Way of the Wood', 'The Green Way', the great faith of the Saldaens. Since the settlement of Saldae, this deep-felt druidic faith of nature worship has enabled the halflings to turn these once marginal lands into a garden of paradise. A place so special, fertile and beautiful that once sighted by Lixan sea traders one hundred and fourteen years past, it was inevitable that the visitors would seek to claim its bounty, at any cost.

This is the cruel and ironic fate of Saldae; without the Saldaen's and the Green Way this land will revert to impoverished scrub; but because of the paradise that they have created, their gentleness and pacifist faith, it would seem unlikely that the Saldaen's will be able to hold onto their lands.

COLONISATION

Over one hundred years ago, Heletians in Lixus were debating the fate of the newly discovered lush lands of Saldae. While the ruler of Lixus, Lord Dominique Adrien, worked out the ground rules for a title system and laws regarding settlement, poor Lixans, frustrated with the delays, set sail in increasing numbers for the new lands. Within months hundreds arrived in Saldae, in a few years the colonists numbered thousands.

At first the native Saldaens welcomed these tall men from over the seas, the Heletians. After all, the lands were wide and there was plenty of room for everybody. But, as the Lixans started to build their towns they unwittingly started to undo the hard work of the Saldaens. The Green Way is an all-encompassing way of life, one which advocates the conservation of life and reveres creation for the miracle that it is. As the colonists cleared the nearby woods of huge oaks for their towns, with cobbled streets and open sewers, the Saldaens tentatively voiced their horror.

The Heletian governor, one Mario Tanfades, ignored the Saldaen protests, pointing out that their was land and wood enough for all. What Tanfades did not realise was that the Saldaens had planted every oak tree, seeded every grassy plain and nurtured their garden paradise as tools of the Green Way in a rhythmic celebration of life and nature. There's was a garden covering thousands of square miles, a slowly ripening symphony of growth composed by generations, two thousand years in the making. The clumsy, some would say wanton plundering of the Heletians as they cut forest with axe and dug hill with spade, as they grazed their large herds on the virgin pasture, and as they filled the flowing waters with their refuse, struck a disturbing and discordant note which reverberates to this day.

THE DEFIANCE

Some Saldaens were unable to sit back and watch what was happening to their home. At first they were told by their elders to be patient. These wise elder Saldaens pondered the solution to the problem. Some of the young, those who grew too passionate about the destruction of their home met in secret. Sharing news and information, these younger people pooled their knowledge. It became obvious that the world beyond their beautiful home was a dark and brutal place. Being a peaceful people with no history of conflict they were at a loss for how to best repel the colonists. Many who had heard tales spoken by Heletians of far off wars, such as the elven genocide against the Flets, chose to travel, to see the 'real' world. So, over a period of years, hundreds of young Saldaens travelled over the horizon to the Heletian League states and beyond. These young travellers took with them a will to learn the knowledge of war, no matter how horrible its truths would be.

They set themselves an appointed time for their return to Saldae - a century after leaving.

That was one hundred and four years ago.

THE MOUNTAINS OF FURY

Over the past century many Heletians have settled in Saldae, so many that they have renamed their new home Heletian Saldae. Humans now make up the majority of the population of Saldae. As the settlers fell the trees of the oak forest, dam creeks and soil rivers they have changed the land. Where once lush woods and grasslands marked Saldae as paradise, now the land seems to suffer, losing fertility, suffering from salt plagues, its rich soil blowing away in the winds.

The Green Way is seemingly weakening, its healing grip on the land breaking. The Heletians ponder why droughts now seem regular occurrences, and why the Saldaens seem to be disappearing. Only one area seems healthy, though only the Saldaens notice, that is the Falmin Tumps mountains, growing in height, some smouldering in building rage.

It is beyond here, south of the growing mountains that the Saldaens are moving too, seeking refuge from the Heletian madness, and plotting their return.

THE LAKE OF SADNESS

The Lake of Sadness is a new place, a fresh paradise birthed from the Green Way and the labours of the Saldaens. Here in the hidden capital, Ledene, the placid folk meet. Those who are fleeing the dying homeland join with those who are returning from their travels across Dormetia. The travellers return as wise elders, now knowing the ways of war. The method the Green Way has chosen to rid itself of the despoiling Heletian colonists.

The Green Way has given the Saldaens a second chance; from the new island city of Ledene the Saldaens plan for *their* war. They have learned how to fight, and as they see their old home despoiled their blood begins to boil. In the new lands of Saldae the Green Way has energised its children, here the old priests and the numerous (but unfortunately lowly skilled) Cabalists have planned and prepared for war, now it is time for it to be waged.

THE FIELDS OF FORGIVENESS

The placid folk will take back paradise, watering their lost gardens with the blood of Heletians and mulching the soil with Lixan broken bodies. When the Saldae of old is restored to paradise, only then the Heletians will be forgiven.

THE UNDERGROUND

The Underground encompasses nearly the entire Saldaen population. If a Saldaen is not an active member (based in New Saldae) then they will most likely be a sympathiser. The majority of the placid folk have left old Saldae, and joined their brothers and sisters in Ledene. Their growing fury at the Heletians' folly driving them away.

The Underground is lead by Malbadan, the High Priest of the Green Way (issue 21) and also advised by Stelton, the head of the Saldaen Cabal (issue 21). Stelton is an elemental of incredible power, her casting combined with the blessings of Malbadan have created a good deal of the New Saldae, all, of course, by the good grace of the Green Way.

ITS METHODS

The Underground has only recently started its activities. It concentrates on attacking transport routes, aiming to firstly make life uncomfortable, and eventually untenable for the colonists. By this method it is hoped that the Heletians numerical advantage can be reduced by causing an exodus back to Lixus. The second stage of tactics will be outright war, with the Saldaens relying heavily on both divine and arcane magic. This stage will be starting within days, the Summer Solstice



being set as an auspicious day for their plans to ripen. By the end of the year the Saldaens hope that war will have spread across all of Old Saldae. Such an unexpected offensive should scare away many settlers, but the nobles of Lixus with generous land grants in Old Saldae, are not as likely to wave their estates goodbye. War will not be quick, it may take years and thousands of lives to win.

NEW SALDAE

The area known as New Saldae is a little over fifty years old, prior to its rejuvenation it was little more than desert wastelands.

New Saldae is obviously a young place, nothing built or growing here is old, there are no towering ancient forests, only woods and thickets of saplings and semi-mature trees. Animal wildlife is mostly absent, much of it still being back in Old Saldae, and only now moving south to new, lush pastures.

This new land is a place of second chances, a blessed place, a paradise newly born. It is mainly grassy plains, thickets of young woods, several small villages and a young lake. In the middle of the lake is the city of Ledene, the heart of Saldae.

THE CITY OF LEDENE

Ledene is not a city in the sense of tight, twisting streets, stinking sewers and buildings stacked side-by-side flooded by crowds, sights

and sounds. Far from it. Ledene is a place of gentle beauty, a harmonious blend of land and people, and yet home to ten thousand. The island that the city is built upon is roughly circular and a little over a mile across (with the lakes nearest shore being a half mile away). The island is a mix of low buildings, gardens, ferry jetties and paths. It is a place of peace and plenty.

A WRY SMILE AND A WINK

The Saldaens are a peaceful folk, but they have learned a great deal in the past century. The Green Way has been weakened, corrupted by the Heletian colonisation, so much so that it has planted and nurtured the idea of war in its children, a fight to the death.

As the war begins across Saldae many extraordinary sights will be seen. Newly captured land will burst with new life as woods and grasslands rise out of the dry soil at divinely accelerated rates. There will be those among the Heletians (particularly those who follow Tergaia - issue 15) that will side with the Saldaens, such honest people will be welcomed by the little folk.

Sadly, for every one hundred Heletians that side with the Saldaens one of the halfings will act as an informer for the Heletian colonists. Such treachery will be costly, but such twisted souls are easily spotted, and cursed by the Green Way to die terrible deaths.

Again, war comes to Unae. ☉

THE MARAN STATES

THE MINOR HELETIAN LEAGUE STATES FOR THE REALMS CAMPAIGN OF UNAE

By Colin Taber.

The Heletian League is made up of seven surviving states. While each is unique in its own way, they are all distinctly Heletian.

Although a dominant force in Dormetia, and indeed a possible force of import to all of Unae, the Heletian's major weakness is in their many divisions. Gulfs gape between the peasants and the townsfolk, the landers and the seaman, the wealthy and the poor, the Church and the Cabal, the Sidian and the Maran. It seems that these people spend a great deal of time looking for reasons to mistrust their own brothers. Such divisions have always been their way, perhaps one of the major ties that holds them together. But, by far, their strongest chord of unity is their common faith, the Church of Baimiopia.

Yet still, their divisions are something they should be wary of. Such rivalries have cost these people dearly in the past, just ask the ghosts of a dozen dead kingdoms.

Forgive me! I forget Ossard. Ask the ghosts of thirteen dead kingdoms!

-Forwao, Elven Charlatan

UNAE

Realms regulars will know that we've been detailing our own systemless fantasy world since issue 7. Here we present the tenth in a series of source articles covering the nations of that region called Dormetia. Presented here are summaries of those Heletian League States that have yet to be detailed - Lixus, Kano, Teramo, Lucera and Heletian Saldae.

THE BIRTH OF THE HELETIANS

The Heletian people were once scattered across the vast plains of Dormetia in dozens of tribal groups. These tribal groups prospered in the wide open spaces, each developing and

influencing their neighbouring tribes, and in turn being influenced. Slowly, what had been camp sites became villages, these, as the years passed, grew to be towns and over time some matured into cities. Such old centres and kingdoms are told of in Heletian legend. This was well over a thousand years ago, a time when fledgling alliances between these new Heletian tribal nations brought the first human empires to Dormetia. While little is recorded of this long lost past, it is known that around two thousand years ago the sea level started to rise, eventually flooding the vast plains that now lie under the Maroklaran Sea. This slow process of inundation took a thousand years to complete, in which time many of the Heletian nations were gradually cut off from each other as the people sought higher grounds. Some nations were never to be heard from again.

Whilst the rising sea level forced the Heletians to war against inland ogres, orcs and other nations over increasingly scarce land, it also isolated the tribal nations in a way that has created a deep divide amongst the Heletian peoples. Today the island-based nations of the Heletian League speak a different dialect of their common tongue to that of the mainlanders of Greater Baimiopia and the Kramer Confederation. Here, the dialect known as *Maran* is used, and while a mainlander *Sidian* speaker can often be understood a conversation is not be an easy task.

The isolated development of the island nations over the past millennia has also created a slightly different culture, it is very rich with associations with the sea and devoid of much of the forest, valley and mountain influences that dominate the culture, folklore and superstitions of the Sidian speakers.

When the Heletian League was formed in 302EK many of these differences faded slowly away as the surviving Heletian peoples shared and mixed their many societies into one strong culture. This process was largely guided and controlled by the Church of Baimiopia. Another strong force in this consolidation of a common Heletian culture was also the major driving force behind the formation of the League itself - trade. Far-travelling merchants, envoys, Churchmen, mercenaries, artisans, entertainers and sailors exposed themselves and many others to their own and other Heletian cultures.

While the heart of the Heletian League is the Holy City of Baimiopia, in Greater Baimiopia, it is now time to explore the Maran members of the League. Although less populous and powerful they do represent one third of the Heletians in Dormetia and five of the seven surviving states of the League.

LIXUS

Lixus is the most conservative of all Heletian League states (which is saying something), and the third most powerful. The nation was founded over seven centuries ago, originally as an alliance of fishing towns, but slowly grew to encompass all of the Lixan island and many nearby islands, including Kano. In 85EK Greater Lixus collapsed during *The Great Schism* in which the throne was claimed by the Adrien family (with assistance from the Church of Baimiopia) and many of the outlying areas (such as Kano) gained autonomy or complete independence.

Lixus was, until recently, ruled by the widowed Lord Roberto Adrien. Three months ago, upon the tragic death of his only and beloved daughter, Anna Adrien (in a sailing accident), Lord Adrien took his own life. This most devout man took poison in the palace chapel, leaving only a letter behind which spoke of matters of state, and bequeathed his title of Lord of Lixus to his younger brother.

Today this island nation of shepherds, shipwrights and fisherman is governed by Lord Senviva Adrien, a traveller, merchant and scholar. Until recently, Senviva was the Dean of the University in Gades, and reluctant to give up his studies to take up the sceptre of rulership. It remains to be seen if he is able to handle the day to day affairs of the nation.

Most of Lixus is made up of rolling plains, broken only by four small but brutal mountain ranges and the Maroklaran Sea. The capital of Lixus is Cartagena, a city of 51,000. The port of Cartagena is the largest amongst the Maran states, and home to the great shipbuilders of Lixus. Nearby is the nation's other city, Gades. This port city of 27,000 is the centre of the livestock markets, being central to the farming plains of Lixus. The city is also home to the only university in the nation, the Church-sponsored Adrien University. Until recently the provincial city

was plagued by a terrible crime problem, murders, kidnappings, assaults and tomb robbing amongst other illegal activities made Gades a place of bolted doors and sealed windows after nightfall. It has only been a matter of weeks since these criminal happenings ceased, and for that the ordinary folk are rejoicing. Some say that the Stellisto (issue 15) and thieves guild have finally come to some arrangement, others claim it is merely the calm before the storm.

The Dark One, the leader of the Lixan branch of the Cabal is said to live in Gades, along with the other fifteen members of the organisation (issue 21). Of course there are those who blame the more sordid aspects of the city's crime problem on the Cabal, but so much of this talk is rumour and innuendo.



KANO

This small kingdom is one of constant feuds and backward ideals. It is very conservative, and is often seen as a follower or puppet of Lixus. The truth of Kano is far more disturbing... (see future issues).

Kano is ruled by King Marcus IV of the House of Leptis, his family has held the throne on and off for four hundred and thirty years (Kano became a sovereign nation after the Great Schism which saw it declare independence from Greater Lixus in 8SEK). The House of Leptis has had to fight off many claims to the throne by the House of Abdera - the crown has changed hands several times.

The trouble is, the royal privileges are insufficient to hold power, with the royal estates depleted through mismanagement and neglect. Whilst the Leptis family has held the throne for the past seventy years (through three generations) the Abdera family has been increasing its wealth and influence; some say that it is only a matter of years before the crown is again snatched. The head of the Abdera family is forty seven year old Isabella, a matriarch who has her eyes set on being Queen of Kano before she dies, hoping to hand on the crown to her eldest son, Roberto.

The only large city in Kano is Abruzzi, the capital, it is also the only large port, and is home to 21,000.

The history of Kano is one of twisting intrigues and corruption, generally revolving around the Leptis and Abdera families and their attempts at gaining or holding onto the crown. Such plots and scandals have involved cabalists, kults, foreign powers, kings and armies, and even the Church of Baimiopia.

Kano is a self-absorbed place where every citizen is just another piece to be manoeuvred on the Abdera-Leptis game board. Caution is advised to any who wish to travel here, lest they become entangled in webs only the local families can hope to understand.

HELETIAN SALDAE

Savilla is the capital of this dying land. Once a fertile paradise, it is now a drought-stricken place of abandoned Saldaen villages, banditry and war. The colonisation of Saldae by Lixans has been a two-edged sword, one that is still bleeding its participants (see the previous article, and issue 21's Cabal article).

Incredibly, the local branch of the Heletian Cabal in Saldae receives assistance from the Church of Baimiopia. These traditional foes have joined forces here to resist the Saldaen Underground and that organisation's attempts to rid their homeland of the Heletian settlers.

Heletian Saldae is governed from the city of Savilla (population 25,000) by Lord Sef Custandis. While technically an independent state, and member of the Heletian League, Heletian Saldae is mostly a puppet of Lixus.

TERAMO

This Heletian League state is made up of several coastal baronies each owing allegiance to Good King Cirino who resides in the capital, Cambrio. Teramo is famous for its agricultural produce, even though a great deal of its estates are semi-arid. Careful and diligent efforts by the peasants of the estates has so far guaranteed a regular harvest. In

return for these fine efforts the peasants of Teramo are very well-treated, and they are the healthiest and most 'free' in all Dormetia.

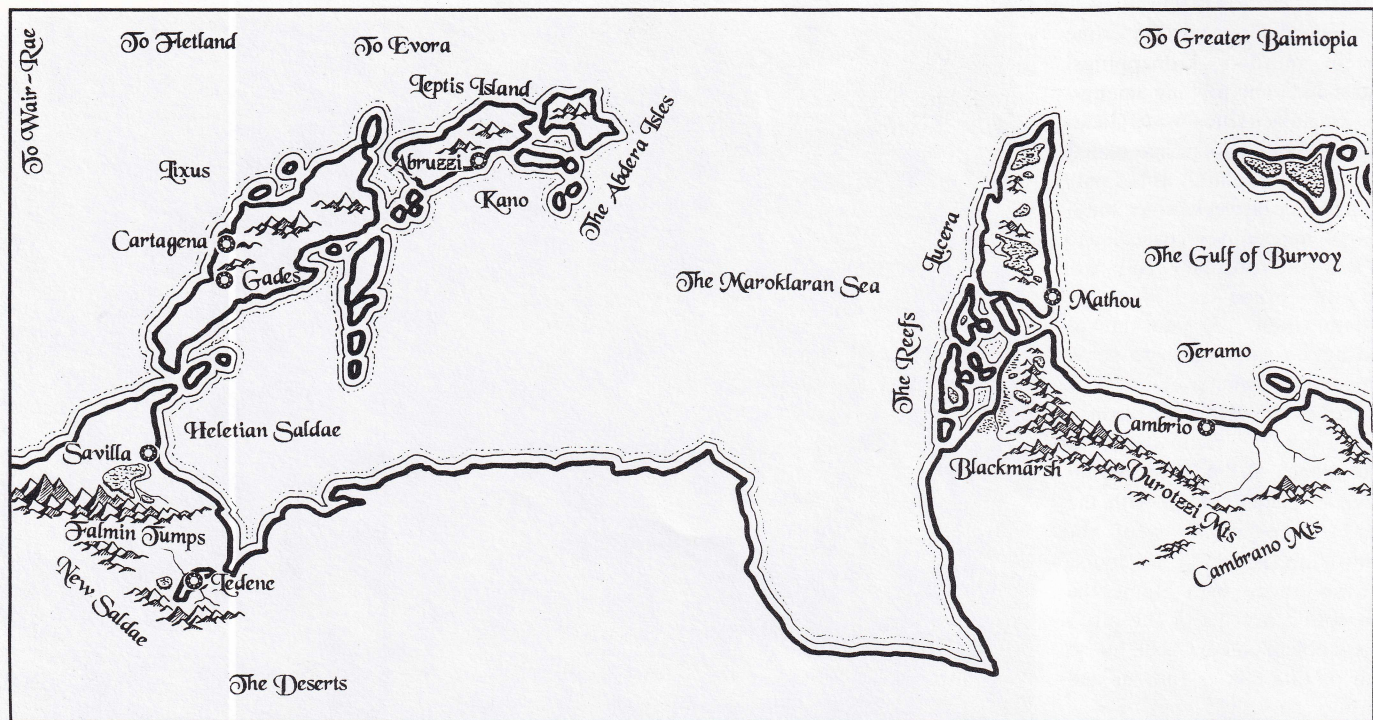
Teramo is a relatively peaceful and out of the way place, it is rarely involved in anything other than trade, the exceptions being the occasional raids by orc clans or the human desert nomads from the southern deserts, and the squabbles with neighbouring Lucera.

King Cirino is a fifty-nine year old man, with a keen mind and training in sciences, theology and rumour goes, even in alchemy. King Cirino's eldest son, Mario is set to take the throne after his marriage in the spring of next year to Princess Maria, second daughter of King Reynald II of Burvoy (issue 18).

Teramo has had many disagreements (more frequent of late) with Lucera, a neighbouring Heletian League nation nicknamed the Pirate State. The activities of the citizens and 'merchants' of Lucera are always questionable, usually without ethics or morals and often sordid and criminal. So far no dispute has gone beyond the occasional one on one ship to ship skirmish, but eventually (rumour says) King Cirino will order his navy to action.

LUCERA

The island League state of Lucera is known as the 'scum of all Heletian States'. It is home to pirates, Cabalists, kultists and criminals. Such is the reputation of the island that any plague elsewhere in the League is automatically assumed to be from Lucera, and often called *Lucera's Gift*. It is a lawless place, a place of danger, but also one of opportunity.



Officially Lucera does put on a facade of trying to control its problems, but the truth is that there is too much money being made by the officials, merchants and Lord of Lucera for it to be worth their while stopping the activities. Lucera is by far the most corrupt state of the League, one so corrupt, that even the local benefice of the Church of Baimiopia has been implicated in smuggling and other criminal activity.

Lucera's only large city is the capital, the port of Mathou. Here 45,000 people are crammed into one of the most cosmopolitan cities in Dormetia. Here anything imaginable is for sale, much of it contraband taken from other nations within Dormetia.

Lord Adruna keeps a tight grip on the happenings of Lucera, both legal and not. Any operation that is big enough to be bringing in serious coin will be known to him, if not run by him. Many reckon Lord Adruna is the wealthiest man in all of Dormetia. His only cause for disquiet is his lack of an heir.

Lucera is also home to two other well known items, the first being a large number of the Maroklara's pirates. Many use the friendly port of Mathou as a safe base where they will periodically put in for repairs, carousing and also to unload freshly stolen goods.

The other item, or more correctly, personality, that Lucera is well known for is Dormetia's second most powerful Sango Drajo, and head of the local Cabal, the Bleeder. This powerful and terrifying mage lives among the deep limestone caves of 'the Rocks' conducting his researches and acquiring more power and knowledge. Only the foolhardy or desperate ever approach this part of the nation.

THE LEAGUE COMPLETED

While this issue's information on the Maran members of the Heletian League states is necessarily brief, it, in conjunction with previous issues' material, paints a complete picture of life in the surviving seven Heletian nations (the recently fallen Ossard, of course was the eighth state - issues 17-20).

All states of the League have now been detailed, further information on the Maran states will be printed in future issues and also in the Unae Play-By-Mail games being run by Australian Realms. For more information on the Unae PBM contact Australian Realms at PO Box 220, Morley, Western Australia 6943 or the Internet at nicklean@perth.dialix.oz.au.

WHERE TO NEXT?

Next issue (issue 23) we present the first exciting instalment of a two part (sixteen page) mini-campaign set in Vangre, largest city in the Kramer Confederation of City-States (issues 11 & 12). We have a lot of surprises in store, and we strongly suggest that if you are running an Unae campaign, or are about to start one, that you direct your players to Vangre so that you can join in the fun.

The year is 515 EK, it is early summer ☼

UNAE INDEX

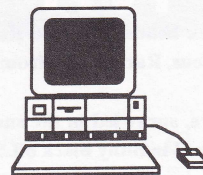
We've had so many questions asking "Where is it?" that we thought it time to print an index. Unae so far is approaching three years work and one hundred pages of articles (and we can assure you that there is plenty more coming).

Issue	Article	Area	Page/s
7	Orcs of Unae	Ungria	20-21
8	The Forest - <i>scenario</i>	Burvoy	4-8
8	Pure at Heart	Burvoy	23-25
9	Death in Thvatta - <i>scen.</i>	Burvoy	5-10
10	Tessa I - <i>mini camp</i>	Kramer	5-9
11	Tessa II - <i>mini camp</i>	Kramer	4-7
11	The Kramer Confed.	Kramer	26-29
12	Vangre Below - <i>scen.</i>	Kramer	5-9
12	Ogre Clans	Dormetia	28-29
12	Church of Baimiopia	Dormetia	34-35
13	Greater Baimiopia	Grt. Baim	7-11
14	Lonely Child - <i>scen.</i>	Evora	6-9
14	Evora	Evora	38-41
15	Kultist!	Dormetia	22-23
15	So You Wanna Be...	Dormetia	29-31
16	Fletland	Kalraith	22-25
17	Greater Good - <i>fiction</i>	Kramer	8-11
17	City of Cold Silence	Ossard	13
17	Gargoyle Hives	Kalraith	14-15
18	Friendly Guise - <i>scen.</i>	Grt. Baim	9-13
18	Burvoy	Burvoy	26-29
18	Home of Dark Malice	Ossard	30
19	The Abbey - <i>scenario</i>	Grt. Baim	8-12
19	Den of Corruption	Ossard	22-23
20	Doomed City - <i>scen.</i>	Ossard	8-13
21	Magic In Unae	Dormetia	26-27
21	The Dormetian Cabal	Dormetia	28-29
21	Faiths in Dormetia	Dormetia	30-31

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Blinded by snow, freezing to the bone, Ratz crawled to the edge of the ridge and peered over. With a snort of disgust, the sixteen year old took in what he saw on the plain before him. Oil wells marred the once pure white plain, roads swept across the land like scars, and smoke polluted the chilled air. Activating his Smartgoggles, the EcoRaidr magnified what he saw one hundredfold, focussing on GMI HovTransports, M-62 "Volcano" SAM Launchers, "Boris" Powered Armour, AV-8's, oil wells, storage tanks, fully-armed soldiers, bunkers, artillery... A war just waiting to happen.

"Drek heads!", cursed Ratz as he turned to report to the rest of the EcoFront team. Suddenly something writhed in the snow to his left. Curious, Ratz moved from his position to investigate.

There, sprawled in the snow and in its death throes was an Arctic Gull. Once pure and white like the plain below, the beautiful bird was covered in filthy black oil...

FIRE & ICE

ACTION AND INTRIGUE IN THE CYBERPUNK/CYBERGENERATION WORLD.

BY JONATHAN A. SPEAR.

The Adventure

This scenario is primarily intended for use with the *Cyberpunk 2020/Cybergeneration* systems, although other near-future games such as *Shadowrun* or *GURPs Cyberpunk* would be equally appropriate with a minimum of modification by the referee. Players of modern or futuristic systems (eg. *RIFTS*) may also find this scenario to be a good basis for an action and intrigue packed adventure.

The power levels of characters depends upon the referee, although the scenario was created with a party of around four to five Edgerunners or Yogangers in mind. The party will need a wide mixture of abilities and powers, including a capacity to negotiate with desperate terrorists and psycho 'borgs, manipulate corporate computer systems, infiltrate well-protected facilities, survive some of the world's harshest terrain, and fight off rabid cyberpsycho huskies! Mere ability to lay waste to vast amounts of bad guys will only result in the failure of the player's mission.

Whilst some abilities and equipment of NPC's are suggested, it has been largely left up to the individual referee as to the particular statistics of the various allies and adversaries encountered in the adventure.

The Plot Line

The scenario is divided into six general sections: The Job, Getting There, Scouting, Convincing Terranostra, An Alternative Solution, and The Conclusion. Whilst the players are fairly free to formulate their own actions and directions within each section, the referee should never let the pace

of the adventure slacken. The importance of concluding their task quickly should be emphasised to the players, as they see the corporations constantly expanding their influence and destroying the delicate Antarctic environment with each hour that passes. Keep the players under pressure and constantly plagued by potentially deadly weather changes, equipment breakdowns (see *Chromebook 3 - Maintenance Rules*), marauding wildlife, corporate security teams and navigation problems. The life of a cyberpunk was not meant to be easy!

Setting, Tone and Themes

The adventure is set in 2027 Antarctica. Yes, that's right, Antarctica! What does this mean for our street and shadow dwelling 'runners then? Let's see... no skyscrapers, no slums, no crowds, no ammo shops, no trauma team, virtually no Net coverage, no easy hiding places, no CHOOH2 stations, no malls, no arcologies, wide icy plains, rugged mountains, ice floes, crevasses, penguins, seals, sub-zero temperatures, the list goes on! Still up to the job? Sound too tough? C'mon, chombatta, you ain't seen drek yet!

Antarctica, a place of rugged wilderness and beauty... until now! Everyone's favourite velcro-heads, Petrochem Associates International and Soviet World Oil Industries (see *Corpbok 3*) have set up shop in the world's last great wilderness, and they mean business! Their Polar Oil recovery programs, which flagrantly violate the 1990 treaty banning mineral exploration in Antarctica, utilise vast drilling rigs to penetrate the thick ice and rock crust which separates the vast oil reserves from the greedy megacorporations. Both Petrochem and

SovOil stand to make untold billions of eurodollars from this venture. In addition, both corporations are considering clearing thousands of square kilometres of the icy continent to make way for the growth of bio-engineered, cold resistant, T.megasuavis grain which is used to produce CHOOH2 (as has already been done in Siberia and Alaska).

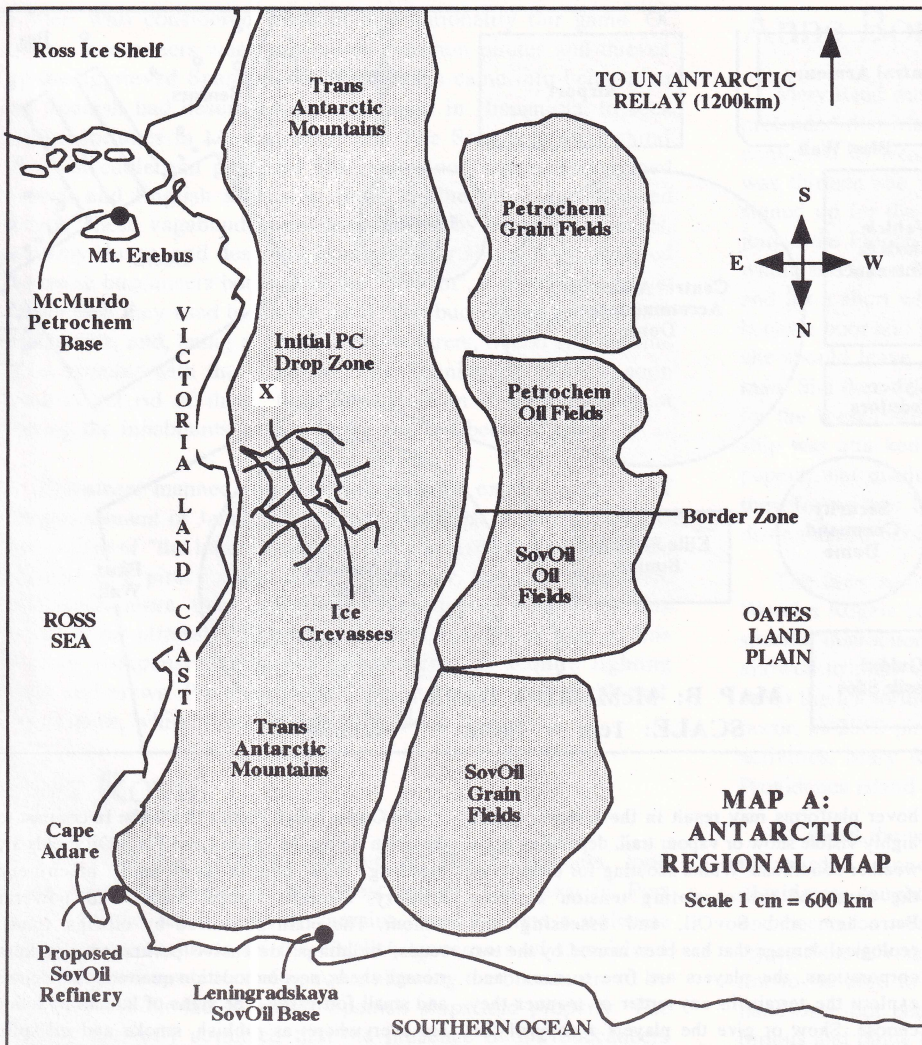
The environmental cost of this vast exercise? Why, nothing... according to the corporations! After all, there's only ice, rocks and snow in Antarctica, right? Wrong!!!

The exploitive plans of Petrochem and SovOil will have devastating effects on the fragile Antarctic ecosystem. Drilling rigs will scar the icy landscape like foul pockmarks and transit roads will cut across the continent. Oil spills, garbage, radiation and sewage will pollute the waterways and snow. Land clearing for grain fields will destroy scarce and precious wildlife habitats and mating grounds. Increased human presence will destroy ancient travel, fishing and breeding patterns of the Antarctic fauna. And if an oil spill should occur... one of the greatest ecological disasters in history will follow!

Terranostra

Someone has to prevent this environmental heresy, and the Terranostra Organization believe that they are the ones to do it!

The Terranostra extremists are a group of European eco-terrorists who are violently opposed to any form of environmental degradation. In the past they have bombed, assaulted, sabotaged, murdered and blackmailed governments, corporations and private individuals whom



being their usual greedy selves, but perhaps they are being manipulated by some other organization? Whatever the case, Rache has set the forces of Eco Front (*Eco Front* sourcebook) to the task of finding out the truth behind events on the world's most cold and desolate continent. Will the Eco Front team be able to bring hope and sanity to a world that is dominated by greed and chaos? Will they be able to make a difference that counts?

The Job

If the scenario is being played with Cybergeneration Yogangers, then chances are that they are already involved with the Eden Cabal to some extent. If this is the case, then the players will be contacted by one of Rache's many bizarre virtuality sims through a V-Term. If the players are standard Edgerunners, then they too will be contacted by one of Rache's virtuality sims. A talking caricature of President Whindam with a live ferret inserted through his head should prove to be a suitably bizarre and disturbing icon by which Rache can present himself. For some examples of Rache's typically twisted sense of style and humour, check out the *Bastille Day* or *Guide to the Net* supplements. Those players who are unfamiliar with Rache's personality should be almost certain that they are conversing with a total loony!

Rache's icon will explain, in his own idiosyncratic way, that tensions and sabotage seem to be escalating between Petrochem and SovOil in the Antarctic, and that their operations there are causing great environmental damage. As the player characters seem to be competent and trustworthy, Rache offers them the dual task of investigating the nature of the tensions and sabotage on both sides, as well as assessing the level of damage that is being wreaked upon the ecosystem by the greedy and destructive megacorps. The players are to look into the Antarctic environmental situation from the ground level, assess the reason for the tensions between Petrochem and SovOil, and resolve the situation if it appears that tensions may escalate to a point which is detrimental to the Antarctic ecology.

The Eden Cabal is unable to provide the players with a vast cash reward for their services, although a few thousand eurobucks may be in order, depending on the referee's judgement. Instead, Eden Cabal can offer valuable contacts, future assistance, sensitive information, rare and useful equipment, future employment, rare Net programs, access to Eden Cabal safehouses, and other useful non-monetary rewards. In addition, the Eden Cabal is willing to provide some useful equipment for the mission, including arctic weather gear, provisions, reactimesh camouflage netting (*EcoFront* p.33), arctic tents and survival gear, ski gear, compact hover platforms (*Cybergeneration* p.103) and any other equipment that the referee sees fit to provide. Remember, however, that any equipment that the players forget to bring on the mission cannot be simply bought at the local Antarctic corner store! A lightly armed and armoured AV or spinner with a communications centre will be provided to act as a mobile team base. Finally, an experienced Edgerunner wilderness survival guide, Feral (see NPC's section), will accompany the team to act as an advisor and link to the Eden Cabal.

Terranostra believe are guilty of "Crimes Against Mother Earth". The financing, organization and direction of Terranostra is known only to a few highly ranked members of the group, which seems to consist of a few hundred elite terrorists throughout the world. It is virtually impossible to join this exclusive eco-terrorist group. Instead, Terranostra seems to choose people who they wish to be members, according to ideology, skill and security. Those few who are selected by the Terranostra commanders are then kidnapped and given a simple choice: join or die! So far, all attempts to infiltrate Terranostra have ended in dismal failure.

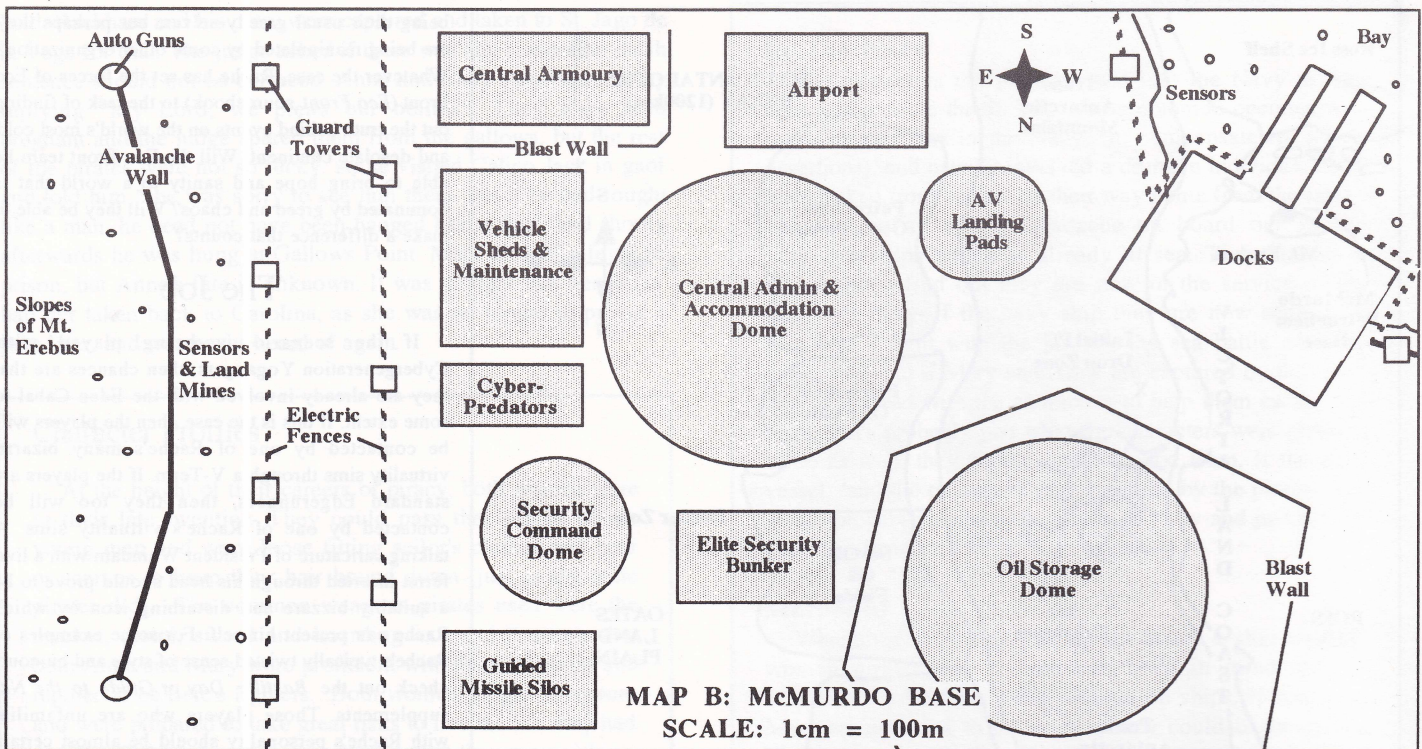
The masterminds behind Terranostra have come up with an ingenious plan to put a stop to the exploitation of Antarctica by both Petrochem and SovOil. The two corporate giants were involved in a huge war in the South China Sea (*Corpbook 3*) that severely crippled both corps for several years, as well as numerous smaller conflicts in areas such as the Bering Sea off Alaska. By performing acts of sabotage on installations belonging to both these old enemies, Terranostra hopes that their terrorist acts will be blamed by one corporation on the other. It is the ultimate hope of the Terranostra commanders that their sabotage activities will result in such an escalation of tension that Petrochem and SovOil will engage in hostilities once more, crippling both corporations and distracting them from any further Antarctic exploitation.

The Problem

Sounds like a great idea, doesn't it, chombatta? Let the corporations wipe each other out and as a consequence stop them from destroying the environment, what could be better? Hmm... Unfortunately, the Terranostra plan is a rather short-sighted one. Whilst everyone would just love to see drek heads like Petrochem and SovOil scum each other into oblivion, it is almost certain that the vast conflict the Terranostra are trying to provoke will result in far greater damage to the Antarctic ecosystem than the corps' drilling and harvesting operations would have! The Second Corporate War in the South China Sea resulted in massive ecological damage to the entire region... damage which still remains to this day.

Eden Cabal and Eco Front

Terranostra seem either unaware or unconcerned as to the consequences of their scheme. Others, however, are not as naive. The Eden Cabal's ace netrunner, Rache Bartmoss (*Cybergeneration* and *Rache Bartmoss' Guide to the Net*), became aware of the increasing tensions between Petrochem and SovOil during the course of "routine" intrusions into both companies' systems. Ever paranoid and suspicious, Rache smells a rat! Why would these corporate giants want to start a costly war, when both suffered devastating losses in the South China Sea conflict? Perhaps the corps are



If the players seem reluctant to accept Rache's offer of employment, then it's time to play on their consciences! Rache will berate the characters for copping out, labelling them as tools of The Machine and drek-eating sell-outs. He will point out to the characters that if they won't do something to make a difference, then who will? Their refusal to help the Eden Cabal will result in the extinction of multitudes of endangered Antarctic species and the destruction of a unique ecosystem. If even this emotional blackmail doesn't work, then the players must truly be a heartless bunch of punks!

Getting There

The player characters, Feral, the AV and their equipment will all be smuggled by Eden Cabal onto a Cousteau Society Antarctic research ship, "The Kraken" (*EcoFront* pp.8-9). From international waters, "The Kraken" will elude Petrochem and SovOil patrol ships as it enters within AV range of the Antarctic continent. From this range, the character's AV (piloted by Feral) will quickly skim across the icy waters, below radar coverage, and land at the Drop Zone (see Map A) in a rough and rocky trip that takes approximately half an hour to complete. As "The Kraken" cruises back into international waters, Feral will order the players to camouflage the AV from visual and infrared surveillance. Now the mission truly begins!

Scouting

Feral will remain in the AV and act as an advisor and home base for the mission, only moving it when the team needs to travel long distances. The relatively easy visibility of the AV means that the players will have to either move on foot, on skis (Athletics skill) or by hover platform (Thrash or Pilot AV skill) when they are in close proximity to corporate bases or forces. Note that the use of

hover platforms may result in the formation of a highly visible snow or vapour trail, depending upon weather conditions. Whilst scouting for clues as to the cause of the escalating tension between Petrochem and SovOil, and assessing any ecological damage that has been caused by the two corporations, the players are free to scout and explore the terrain in any order or manner they choose. Show or give the players a copy of the Area Map A and then let them formulate a plan of action, with suitable advice from Feral.

Depending upon the areas which the players investigate, they should discover the following scenes and activities taking place:

(a) Oates Land Plain Grain Fields: The northern and southern portions of the Oates Land Plain are currently under development and testing for use by both Petrochem and SovOil as T.megasuavis grain fields. Small test fields have already been planted by both corporations whilst huge IMA Titan Prime Movers and a Soviet clone version (*Rough Guide to the U.K.* p.39) are being used to clear vast areas for further plantation. These Prime Movers are computer-controlled and there are relatively few humans present in this area. Instead, the fields and development area are guarded by packs of Cyberpredator Huskies (*Chromebook* 3, pp.86-87) and the occasional aerial security patrol.

Wherever the Prime Movers have been all native flora and fauna has been completely wiped from the face of the earth. Breeding grounds and waterways have been crushed into oblivion to make way for the new fields. All is not going well for both corporations, however, as scattered across the fields are signs of burnt-out Prime Mover wrecks and charred fields. Someone seems to be mounting random attacks on the operations of both corporations.

(b) Oates Land Plain Oil Fields: In contrast to the grain fields, the Oates Land Plain Oil Fields are bristling with human personnel, machinery, artillery, aircraft, troops, tanks and powered armour. The plain is scarred by oil-rigs, transit roads, buildings, defensive perimeters, bunkers, storage sheds, accommodation quarters, fuel depots and small fortresses. The signs of human pollution are everywhere, as rubbish, smoke and oil spills choke the once pure plain. Security in this area is incredibly tight, as Petrochem and SovOil have both staked mineral claims in this area. As tensions increase between the corporations, so have the number of military forces deployed in the area by both sides. The well-heads of both companies are only a few hundred meters apart in some areas, making for an extremely tense situation. It is obvious that if a serious military conflict should arise between Petrochem and SovOil, the oil-fields would become a cataclysmic inferno!

Several oil-rigs belonging to both corporations have been destroyed or badly damaged as a result of sabotage over the last two weeks, increasing ill-will between SovOil and Petrochem. Particularly perceptive characters or those with military experience will note, however, that all the wells which have been attacked were of no real strategic, tactical or economic importance. Thus, it seems strange that the corporations would risk attacking unimportant enemy sites in such a random manner. Perhaps the attacks are not the work of corporate strike teams? No actual clues as to the identities of the oil-rig saboteurs are apparent to the characters.

(c) Victoria Land Coast: This wild and windy coast is dominated by rocky beaches, small icebergs, seals, penguins and bird rookeries. The area is teeming with Antarctic flora and fauna, making it a naturalist's paradise. In true corporate form, Petrochem has managed to pollute many of the beaches with refuse and small oil-slicks, as well

as using the region's wildlife as a pool upon which they draw for test subjects in their cyberpredator program. Thus, any characters in the area may be subjected to attacks by cyberpsycho reject animals who failed to please their Petrochem developers and were simply left to roam the coastline until they died. In retribution for this, Terranostra has destroyed several small research stations in the area and are planning on making further strikes.

SovOil are also making their contribution to global ecological disaster, with the construction of a large oil refining and transport terminal at Cape Adare. This facility will eventually dwarf that which SovOil presently use at Leningradskaya, but will not be operational for several years. As a result of these building works, the once magnificent Cape Adare landscape has been brutally denuded by heavy machinery, construction yards and land clearing. Security here is surprisingly lax, as most of SovOil's military forces are presently concentrated on the Oates Land Plain Oil Fields. Terranostra have seized this opportunity and launched a few sabotage raids against the new facility, and given the poor security at present, the players may well feel an urge to do the same!

(d) McMurdo Base: Nestled at the foot of Mt. Erebus is Petrochem's Antarctic Regional Headquarters. McMurdo Base and vast areas of U.S. Antarctic Territory were purchased by Petrochem from the U.S. Government in 2013, in yet another of a long line of corporate sell-outs. Massive quantities of snow blanket the mountainside above McMurdo, necessitating a large reinforced concrete avalanche wall (as shown on Map B) which protects the base from being buried under tonnes of snow.

As Mt. Erebus itself is an island surrounded by miles of deadly icy water, it is extremely difficult for those who are uninvited to reach McMurdo by surface transport. Added to this natural protection are kilometres of electric fence, motion, heat and audio sensors, radar systems, microwave fences, automated guns, guided missiles, cyberpredators (including seals and killer whales!), AV's, powered armour, hovercraft and cyborgs. As such, attempting to penetrate McMurdo is tantamount to suicide, and reaching the slopes of Mt Erebus itself is extremely difficult. Unsurprisingly, Terranostra consider security at McMurdo to be too tight for any action to be taken against it. See the McMurdo Base Map B for more information.

(e) Leningradskaya Base: Like McMurdo, Leningradskaya Base was a research base which was "acquired" from the government who previously possessed it. In this case, SovOil commandeered Leningradskaya upon gaining corporate independence (*Corpbook 3*), and have transformed the base into a major supply and administration centre complete with a small oil refinery. In contrast to McMurdo, Leningradskaya's security is nowhere near as tight as that imposed by Petrochem. The terrain around the SovOil base is thick with rocky outcrops and small valleys, allowing some measure of cover. Whilst the base is surrounded with an electric fence and a few security cameras, there are no motion sensors or other similar sophisticated monitoring devices. In addition, the coastal approach to Leningradskaya is



almost completely unmonitored, allowing easy access to the base via the water. Inside the base, security is provided by foot patrols and monitor cameras. Heavy support is left in the hands of a squad of "Boris" powered armour (as per the *Maximum Metal* supplement) and a combat AV squadron. The bulk of SovOil's Antarctic military power is concentrated in the Oates Land Oil Fields, which has left Leningradskaya's security at a rather poor level. The SovOil headquarters has not yet been attacked by Terranostra, simply because they have been too busy demolishing oil-rigs to attempt a strike against Leningradskaya.

See the Leningradskaya Base Map C for more information on this installation.

(f) Transantarctic Mountains: These rugged, remote mountains in the midst of Victoria Land have remained almost completely untouched by human influence. The corporations are yet to construct any roads or outposts in this area, and it is only patrolled by the occasional AV security flyby. Transport aircraft frequently fly from Petrochem's McMurdo base and SovOil's Leningradskaya to the Oates Land Plain, but surface patrols are extremely rare.

It is in this region that the players are most likely to have some success in locating the Terranostra terrorists. The Terranostra team has established a small, well-concealed base camp in the perilous ice-canyons to the south of the player's original drop zone (see Regional Map A). The camp merely consists of a few snow tents, some ice caves and strategically placed foxholes, all concealed under reactimesh camouflage netting.

Whilst the base camp is virtually impossible to locate by direct visual observation, other signs of the terrorists may be detected by observant

characters. Scattered footprints and ski-tracks, discarded ration packs, small blood spots, collapsed snow caves, cigarette butts, imprints of weapons and equipment in the snow and other unmistakable clues will point to a human presence in the Transantarctic Mountains. Ironically, it seems that not even Terranostra's lofty ecological ideals can keep this precious environment pristine.

And then there's "Frosty the Snow Borg" (see the section on NPC's at the end of the scenario). Frosty has been shadowing the Terranostra team and observing their camp since they arrived in "his" mountains, and will do the same to the players if they remain in the area for more than a few hours. Frosty is unsure what to make of the terrorists, and in turn, the few Terranostra team members who have caught glimpses of the elusive borg and his giant footprints are puzzled by what they have seen. If the players act in a manner which seems to display a concern for the mountainous environment and a distaste for the corporations, Frosty may approach them and offer his aid in locating the Terranostra camp.

It is important to note that the players should not locate either the Terranostra team or Frosty too early in the adventure, as this would ruin much of the searching and suspense involved. Instead, allow the players to investigate the grain and oil fields, the corporate bases and the Victoria Land coast before they make any breakthroughs in locating their true quarry. Only when they have found evidence of a third party involved should they meet with success in finding the Terranostra operatives. If the players are struggling in their search and the pace of the adventure is slackening, the referee may simply have the Terranostra team ambush the characters en masse, and demand to know why they are in the region. Uh oh...

Convincing Terranostra

Whether the characters discover the camp, Frosty leads them there, or the terrorists track down and ambush the EcoFront team, the characters will eventually come into contact with Terranostra's Antarctic strike team. Dealing with a group of 20 ruthless, intelligent and deadly experts, the players will have to tread very carefully or face "termination with extreme prejudice".

Despite the fact that they are very surprised to encounter the characters in such wilderness, the terrorists will react quickly by surrounding the characters, disarming them at gunpoint, then interrogating them. Any attempt to fight the Terranostra team will almost certainly end in a bloodbath, with the players coming out of it as a bunch of red, squishy blobs in the snow!

Assuming that the characters don't do anything stupid and it is ascertained that they are not corporate lapdogs, they will be held in an ice cave at the base camp for further questioning. Once in the base camp, it should be obvious to the characters that their captors are responsible for the sabotage raids, given the large amounts of weaponry, explosives and small vehicles that are scattered around the headquarters. Escape attempts will probably end rather unpleasantly for the players. Soon the characters will be approached by the Terranostra leader, Grace Zanati (see NPCs).

Grace will demand a detailed explanation as to why the characters are in Antarctica, possibly resorting to threats or torture if no satisfactory answers are provided. Grace is an expert interrogator and will almost certainly be able to detect if she is being lied to. Once she has been given a story that she believes, (the truth unless the players come up with a particularly convincing lie), Grace will leave the characters for several hours to contemplate their fate. During this time, the players

should become increasingly fearful as they observe the terrorists eyeing them in a hostile manner, brandishing weapons and intimidating the captives.

Grace will later return, demanding to know why she shouldn't simply have the characters executed. Some intelligent fast talking will definitely be in order! If the characters prove to be unconvincing, Grace will order their immediate execution. Depending upon whether Frosty has been befriended by the characters, the cyborg may emerge from the snow to beg for the release of the EcoFront team, in exchange for a vow of silence concerning the location and activities of the Terranostra operatives. If Frosty has not been befriended, then death is imminent.

If the characters put forward some good reasons, such as the fact that they are only trying to help preserve the Antarctic environment and that they have a similar but less extreme ideological viewpoint as Terranostra, Grace will let them live. She will proudly explain the Terranostra scheme to have Petrochem and SovOil eliminate each other, and will boast of the strikes they have made against the corporations with no loss to the terrorists. Having seen the vast number of military forces in the region, it should be obvious to the players that if Terranostra's plans come to fruition, then an environmental disaster must follow. If this is pointed out to Grace, she will be extremely annoyed at criticism of the Terranostra master plan, but will eventually realise the significance of this rather glaring error. If the players fail to point this problem out, Feral or Frosty may do so instead.

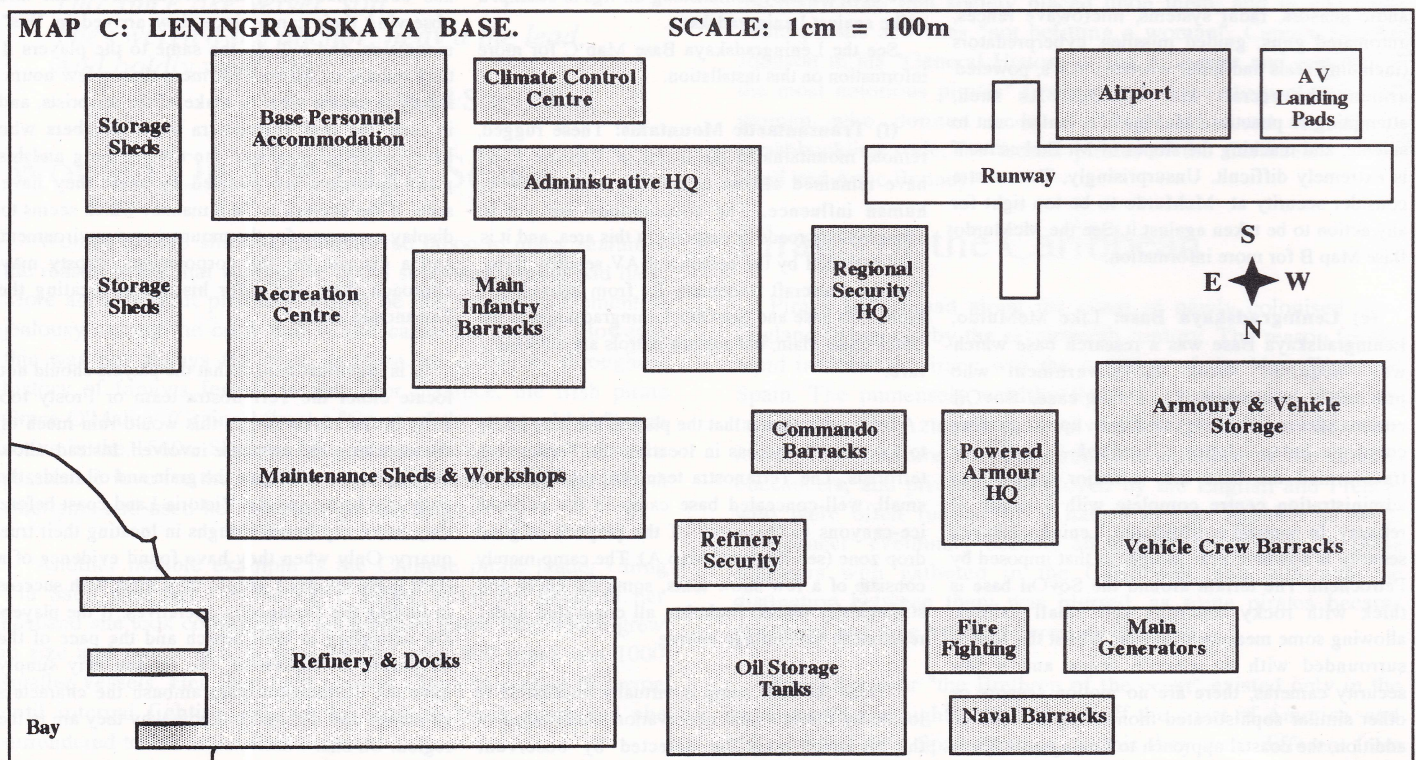
Grace will ask, in a rather sarcastic manner, if the characters have an alternative solution to problem of removing Petrochem and SovOil from the region. She will offer very limited help from Terranostra, preferring to let the characters endanger themselves, rather than Grace's valuable expert team. Time for the players to start thinking!

An Alternative Solution

As any experienced referee will tell you, players always seem to come up with a plan that is as bizarre and unexpected as possible. Therefore, the following suggestions as to an alternative solution to Terranostra's plan are merely guidelines which the referee may find useful.

The most obvious solution lies in eliminating the lifelines that supply and administrate Petrochem and SovOil's Antarctic operations, McMurdo and Leningradskaya base. A direct attack against these bases is bound to result in failure for several reasons. Firstly, both bases (and particularly McMurdo) are well protected against conventional military assaults, which means that a direct attack would almost certainly result in the deaths of the characters. Secondly, attacking the bases may simply result in another escalation in tensions. Thirdly, if an attack was successful, the characters would have to be extremely careful not to allow any oil refineries or tanks to be damaged or ignited, as this may lead to great environmental damage. What is most important is that any action against the corporations must appear to be the result of a natural disaster, a mechanical or electronic fault, or the actions of an independent eco-terrorist group such as the EcoFront or Terranostra. If it appears that the players' actions are the work of one of the corporations, then the war that they are trying to prevent will merely be provoked further. The players may even want to go so far as to leave a "calling card" in order to prevent the corporations from becoming confused about who they are dealing with.

(a) **Eliminating McMurdo Base:** Whilst players may devise other means of thwarting Petrochem in the Antarctic region, one of the best ways of removing the corporation's lifeline in the area is to bury McMurdo base under thousands of tonnes of



ice and snow! McMurdo is protected from avalanches hurtling down Mt. Erebus by a protective concrete barrier. If the characters could remove or weaken the wall with explosives (borrowed from Terranostra) or Alchemical Manipulation (see *Cybergeneration*), then trigger an avalanche on Mt. Erebus, the base would be buried under vast amounts of snow. This would seal off McMurdo for several months, if not years, whilst Petrochem rebuilds and repairs their Antarctic headquarters. Whilst not a permanent solution, this measure would significantly delay Petrochem's plans, costing them billions of eurobucks, and will buy time for the world's ecogroups to bring pressure against the corporation in order to prevent their Antarctic exploitation.

The most difficult part of carrying out this plan would be getting onto Mt. Erebus without being detected by the sophisticated Petrochem surveillance devices. Cyberpredators, roving security patrols and the natural perils of the mountain could all provide the players with serious problems. In addition, it would be practically impossible for the EcoFront team to penetrate and manipulate the McMurdo base data fortress, as the base is only linked to the Net for very short periods in order to make vital data transmissions. Only by entering the virtually impregnable base and physically tapping into the computer system would the players be able to attack Petrochem's system. In the immortal words of Rache Bartmoss: "Don't you just hate meat work?". For further information on Petrochem data fortresses, see pages 38-39 of *Corpbook 3*.

(b) Eliminating Leningradskaya Base: As the security around Leningradskaya is nowhere near as tight as McMurdo's, it may well be possible for the characters to penetrate the SovOil base and cause enough damage to shut it down for months or years. As previously noted, access into Leningradskaya Bay is relatively easy and from there, a covert entry could be made into the base itself. Once inside Leningradskaya, inventive characters could cause untold havoc upon the SovOil regional data fortress (*Corpbook 3* pp.79-80), the refinery, any shipping in the bay, the armoury, climate control systems, the base generators, machinery stores and workshops, living quarters, the runway, the security centre, storage sheds and fuel stores. Once again, it is virtually impossible to access the SovOil data fortress without physically accessing the computer system. There are several perils involved in sabotaging the Leningradskaya base, not the least being the small powered-armour squad and AV squadron that guards the base, and the risk of causing a huge refinery fire if combat or sabotage should get out of hand. In addition, the Terranostra team will be rather wary of becoming involved in such a dangerous attack, although they may lend explosives or aid in covering the players' escape.

The Conclusion:

There are three likely outcomes to this scenario:

Firstly, if the characters have been truly stupid or reckless, then their lifeless bodies will probably be freezing rapidly in the Antarctic snow. The fate of the Antarctic ecosystem now looks rather grim. Better luck next time, chombatta!



Secondly, the characters may have been partially successful in stopping the operations of Petrochem and SovOil. Whilst the corporations may have had their plans delayed, they will probably return to their exploitive ways in a few months. In the meantime, the characters can return to the Eden Cabal on "The Kraken" and plan a more permanent solution to the Antarctic situation. Follow-up adventure, anyone?

Thirdly, the characters may have been extremely successful in disrupting the exploitation of the corporations. Such a blow will leave Petrochem and SovOil down but not out, delaying their expansion in the Antarctic by several years. Once again, a more permanent solution may be sought, when the characters have returned to the Eden Cabal. Perhaps a collaborative effort with Terranostra may be in order? Perhaps Terranostra will seek to employ the characters in future missions of their own? Whatever the case, the Antarctic wilderness has been saved and a cataclysmic war averted... for the moment.

Non Player Characters

Detailed below are the three potential "allies" of the EcoFront team. Referees who want to expand the scope of this adventure may want to devise Petrochem and SovOil adversary NPCs.

Feral (Eden Cabal Guide): A budding Solo in his early twenties, Feral (real name unknown) is renowned amongst the members of Eden Cabal for his great agility and knowledge of wilderness survival skills. Born in Melbourne, Australia, Feral is a quick-thinking but relaxed character who never panics about anything, no matter what the situation. Utilising minimal and unobtrusive cyberware, Feral is tall and dark but otherwise unremarkable in appearance. He prefers to wear utilitarian camouflage gear and always sports several combat knives, survival gear and a powerful sniper rifle. Despite the fact that he is an accurate marksman, Feral prefers to use stealth and trickery rather than firepower to defeat opponents.

Frosty the Snow Borg (Reclusive Cyborg):

Born Stanley Forrester, "Frosty" was one of the original test subjects who was implanted into the Adrek Robotics "Burroughs" Mars Operations Full Conversion Cyborg model (see *Chromebook 3*, pp.97-99). Adrek Robotics tested this model 'borg in the Antarctic in 2021 due to that continent's Mars-like conditions. Unfortunately, Stanley Forrester was driven cyberpsycho by his conversion into a cyborg and long periods spent in icy isolation during testing. As he grew more insane, Stanley developed a love for the Antarctic wilderness and its inhabitants. Just prior to when he was scheduled to be removed from the Antarctic and sent to Mars for further testing, Stanley rebelled against the Adrek Robotics developers and disappeared into the icy wilderness, never to be seen again. Renaming himself "Frosty", the cyborg has been roaming the Transantarctic mountains ever since, occasionally raiding small research bases for any supplies he needs. As a result of his psychosis, Frosty has developed a violent hatred of all corporations and their lackeys, and an obsessive desire to preserve "his" wilderness.

Grace Zanati (Terranostra Team Leader): A beautiful, slim, intelligent German woman with a blond bob, Grace is one of Terranostra's most skilled and dedicated operatives. Originally trained in a U.N. Special Forces unit, Grace is extremely adept in all aspects of espionage and commando operations. Now in her mid-twenties, Grace was more than happy to turn her skills to the preservation of the world's ecosystem when she was approached by Terranostra with the offer of a job. Grace has been augmented by a multitude of cybernetic enhancements, none of which are outwardly visible, and carries a Tsunami Arms sniper rifle at all times. With the financing of the Terranostra organization, Grace has put together an expert commando team of thirteen men and seven women for her Antarctic mission. All of these operatives are highly skilled, superbly equipped, cybernetically enhanced experts in their field who are fanatically loyal to Terranostra. Honed to a razor's edge, they are not a group of people to be messed with, chombatta! ■

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A professional American fanzine-style B4 digest of arcane lore for the Call of Cthulhu keeper, player & enthusiast. Articles include the standard selection of scenarios, campaign details, new Lovecraftian (?) beasts, background source material, and the other related miscellany. Everyone who enjoys chaosium's superb horror RPG would be well advised to invest in this magazine. Quality material by known english and Australian authors are regularly included. Publication regularity is slow. Back issues available are: 5 and 3, the double issue 8/9.

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WHITE DWARF

A glossy, monthly English magazine solely dedicated to Games Workshop products. Enthusiasts of Warhammer RPG, Warhammer Fantasy Battles, Warhammer 40K, Space Hulk, Space Marine, and all the rest, will find this invaluable. Articles cover adventures, scenarios, new rules, variant counters, backgrounds, and the like. Every issue contains photographs & specifications for new Citadel releases, plus colour pages highlighting superb miniatures painting! Publication regularity is very good.

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A bi-monthly role playing magazine published by White Wolf. It features a mix of articles, scenarios, and regular columns and heaps of reviews. Although published by White Wolf it has an independent outlook, and recent games featured ShadowRun, TORG, Vampire, Cyberpunk, Ars Magica, Werewolf, Pendragon, Call of Cthulhu, etc. It includes both colour and black and white pages, and space is given to PBMs, and regular features on artists and their superb works. 80 pages. A percentage of the proceeds are sent on to sponsor a real life wolf pack.

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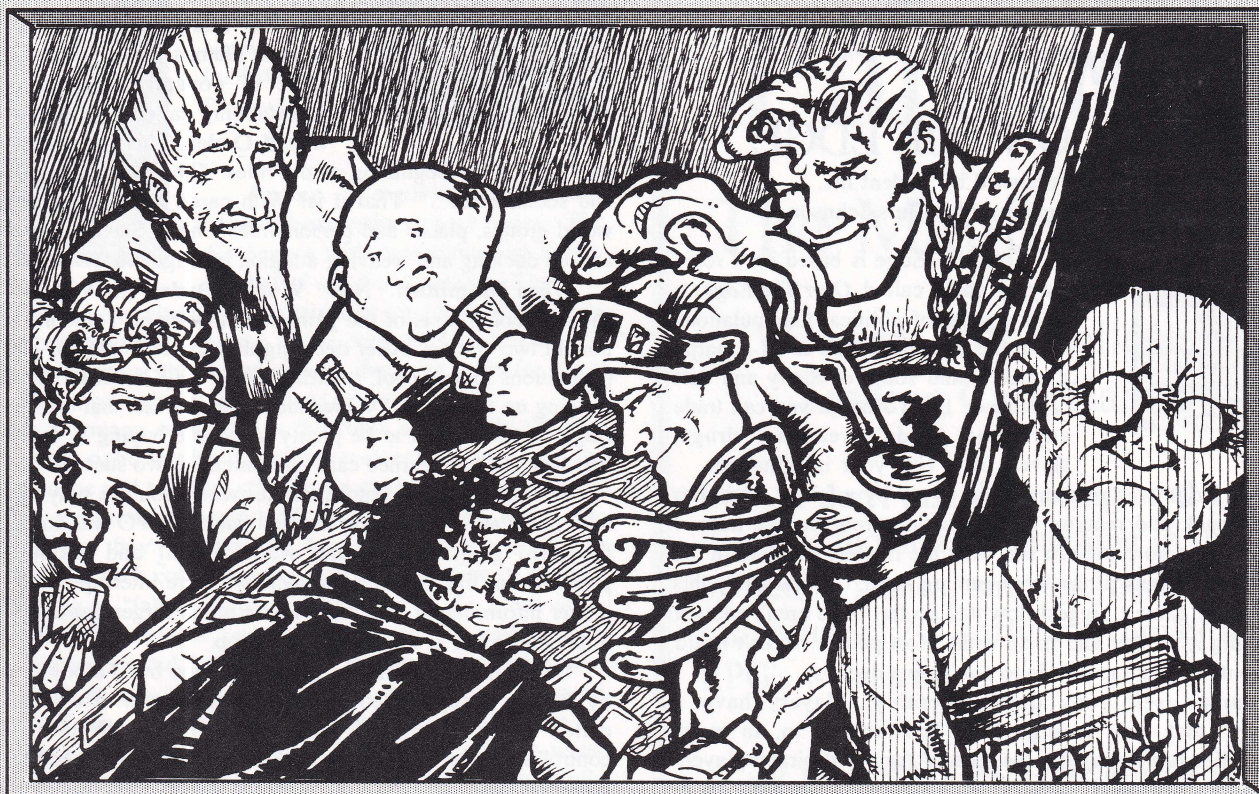
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CARD MAGIC

1



Enchant Role-Players

Welcome to **Card Magic #1**, the *Australian Realms* magazine supplement for players and collectors of collectible trading-cards games. In this first issue:

- ☉ The *Illuminati: New World Order*
"Design-An-Australian-Card" Competition.
- ☉☉ Reviews of *Fallen Empires*, *On The Edge* and *Illuminati: New World Order*.
- ☉☉☉ Take Sixty Cards - Deck Construction
Tips for *Magic: The Gathering*.
- ☉☉☉☉ *Fallen Empires* Checklist and More.

STACKING THEM UP

- Reviews



ON THE EDGE

Published by Trident Inc.
Reviewed by Chris Johnson

On The Edge is based on a role-playing game called *Over The Edge*, a wacky game of political manipulations set in the imaginary land of Al-Amarja, a small island south of Sicily and east of Tunisia. In Al-Amarja you can trade anything; goods, weapons, drugs, slaves, etc... Use your imagination.

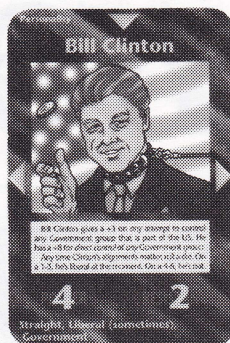
On The Edge was recommended to me by a friend, and after buying one pack and reading the instructions four or five times I decided I liked it, so I went to see what the interest was like in the rest of the card gamers at the local gaming store. Unfortunately this seems to be the game's biggest downfall so far; there aren't enough people buying it to play and trade with! Most people haven't heard enough about the game to decide to purchase a deck.

The game itself runs quite smoothly. Players have a "conspiracy" that they arrange their "characters" in, in ranks (rows) and files (columns). To the side of their conspiracy players have "resources" (for MTG players, resources pretty much equate to land). Players use "pull points" (like mana) to "pull" (call/cast) cards and "influence points" to win the game. Both resources and characters can generate pull points, but generally only characters can help you score influence. When attacking with a character you target another character, not your opponent. You fight to erode your opponents' "influential structure", and to kill their characters that can generate influence, as well as to remove dangerous threats to your own position. The tactics of this game kick in when you realise two points: Firstly, you can't attack through "active" (untapped) characters while doing almost anything "cranks" (taps) a character. Secondly, the same stuff that wins the game for you (influence) is also used to pull more cards - decisions, decisions. As for customising your deck is concerned, there are many traits associated with cards and focussing on a trait will often yield a better deck. These traits include race, gang affiliation, family etc..

One point against **On The Edge** is that it has a disturbing number of parallels with *Magic: The Gathering*, such as cards with identical features but slightly different names, and cards with identical names but slightly different features, and many game mechanics are similar. This makes you think the designers just did a copy of *Magic* and changed a few things here and there. On the positive side, these similarities make it easy for *Magic* fans to pick up the game and play.

Artwork on the cards is average to above average. For those of you that like Drew Tucker's soft lines I'm afraid there's nothing for you here. Much of the artwork is in the style of comic books - hard edged drawings inked with simple colours. There are a few artists that stand out, however, such as K.C. Lancaster, who seems to be colouring on computer, and Doug Shuler, whose soft shading appears on all the Kergillian cards.

All in all, this a game I recommend a look at to those players that prefer political intrigue to sword and sorcery. But before you invest in the game big time, check that there are enough players in your locality to make it worth your while.



ILLUMINATI: NEW WORLD ORDER

Published by Steve Jackson Games
Reviewed by Chris Johnson

The latest offering from Steve Jackson Games is the tongue-in-cheek game of conspiracies, betrayal and backstabbing called **Illuminati New World Order**. This game's major pull

is stated at the beginning of the rules: "This is a work of political and social satire...". That it is! With cards referencing many real-world groups, places and personalities I hope Steve is not going to end up ducking and weaving a legion of litigators.

When **Illuminati: New World Order** (INWO) first hit the shops I scored a set of the game instructions off someone who had bought two starters. After deciding that the examples of play in the instructions looked cool, referring to the Ku Klux Klan and the CIA ganging up to control TV Preachers, and the fact that unlike *On The Edge* there seemed to be plenty of people buying it, I decided to part with my hard-earned cash and purchase two starters.

You know you're onto a winner when you are playing a game only hours after purchasing the first pack. INWO was so popular at the local gaming store that while myself and another player prepared our first decks for a game we were interrupted by another player informing us that there was a much larger game starting up in another room at the back of the shop.

Onto game play. As play progresses you build a power structure by linking groups together, so that, starting with a central node called your "illuminati", you branch out, with the illuminati controlling up to four groups and each group able to control 0 to 3 other groups. Each addition to your power structure is made by takeover and a takeover can come from your own hand or by a raid on your opponents' power structure. Takeovers, and other events, require a die roll, something I'm a little worried about. Already there is a large element of luck in the game - a bad card draw can make life miserable; if you have a bad draw *and* the dice go against you, you're really going to be depressed.

You win the game when you have control of X groups, where X is a number agreed upon at the beginning of the game. You lose when you have no groups left except your illuminati. Other goal cards also set win conditions within the game. Groups have "alignments" and "attributes". Alignments can be government or corporate, peaceful or violent, etc., whereas attributes are along the lines of media, computer, green etc. Like and unlike alignments aid or obstruct common events, takeovers or attacks, whereas attributes have more subtle effects. Each group also has one or more special features, and as most groups represent something in the real world, each feature is humorously related to reality. This is a game designed to be fun to play - the fiercely competitive are unwelcome. Cards encourage you to change rules as you go along, anything that the whole group of players agrees to is welcome. This is the first collectible trading card game I've encountered where players can share victory.

Unlike *On The Edge*, INWO does not have a lot in common with *Magic: The Gathering*. The game mechanics are quite different. This is probably partly due to the fact the game preexisted *MTG* and has been redesigned to compete, not to imitate. INWO does share something with *On The Edge* and *Star Trek: The Next Generation* in that card placement is very structured and placing cards within that structure is a major part of the tactics. Like *Jyhad*, this game is designed to be played in groups, with many cards useless in a two-player game.

The art is the one and only major minus of INWO. The art is too simplistic; the illustrations accurately depict what the designer had in mind but doesn't add much to the look or feel of the game.

The emphasis is on humour not on "gosh-wow" style. I won't be collecting the set for the art. Overall, I like INWO and will carry my two decks with me always in the hope of having a fun game or two. Buy a starter or two then see if you need want more cards.



FALLEN EMPIRES

Magic: The Gathering Expansion Set
Published by Wizards Of The Coast
Reviewed by Nick Leaning

Fallen Empires is a very colourful expansion set for *Magic: The Gathering* with outstanding art and a number of smart innovations. The idea of supplying several alternative illustrations for some of the cards has been done before, but unlike in the collector's nightmare, the *Antiquities* expansion, they've stuck with the same rarity for those cards that do have multiple illustrations.

Among the many other things the folks at Wizards Of The Coast are doing right, they've made sure each expansion set has an underlying theme and told that story in the cards - both in the types of creatures, spells, artifacts and lands they've designed, and in the "colour text" that they've printed on the cards. In this set, the title refers to the way each colour has been given a storyline of internal conflict leading to "fallen empires". The elves of the green deck solved their food shortages by creating the thallids who in turn generated mushroom and fungi food that the elves could consume. Unfortunately things went awry when the thallids became intelligent and rose up against their elvish masters. Similarly, in the black deck, thrulls were generated in breeding pits but when someone trained them to fight, it was not long before the thrulls had risen up to overthrow their former masters. Within blue, conflict arose when the homarids emerged from deeper waters in search of living space in the more pleasant and fertile shallows occupied by the good guy merfolk. White's "lawful good" outlook initially has their people helping out all their hard-pressed neighbours, even black!, until a few zealots stirred up the peasants into a frenzy of "god helps those who help themselves"-type insularity. In the mountains - the dwarves war against the orcs - now where have I heard that plot outline before? Having each colour in **Fallen Empires** with inbuilt adversaries makes the already difficult choice of colour, doubly interesting.

These stories not only make the cards great to collect, but also add to the fun of play as it becomes easy to customise **Fallen Empires** cards into theme decks that work. I personally prefer a deck of orcs and goblins because I'm a bit of an orc at heart, and this expansion gives me a whole mess of outrageous new troops to add into my Revised deck. For those of you like my wife, Karen, who prefer white, you can readily collect a theme deck along the lines of a military army out on campaign with supporting citadels, towns, a few clerics to stiffen up troop morale and a baggage train of healers. For the blue player, check out the crustaceous homarids, they are a hoot.

The one possible design flaw in **Fallen Empires** is one of over-elaboration. Too many cards require counters adding fiddly housekeeping chores to what in essence has always been a really simple and fast card game. For all that, **Fallen Empires** adds a new dimension to an already great game, and in my opinion the art is better than in previous sets. Another triumph for the truly fun and elegant game of *Magic: The Gathering*. ■

NOTE TO COLLECTORS: If you are collecting **Fallen Empires** then you'll be pleased to see we're offering a **FREE** booster pack of **Fallen Empires** cards with each **subscription** we receive until end of April 1995. See our Mail Order form on page 31.

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SIXTY CARDS

DECK CONSTRUCTION TIPS FOR MAGIC:THE GATHERING

by Len Henderson

Creating a sixty card, tournament legal, winning deck is difficult even for advanced planes walkers. This article does not claim to be the be-all and end-all of deck construction, but will provide a few useful guidelines to help you create the deck you want. I'll also give a few examples of common decks, and guidelines on using specific cards.

I am assuming in this article that you have a fair selection of cards to work with. Say, more than 120 or so. With less than this number, it becomes difficult to create a 2 or 3 colour deck, and a less efficient 4 or 5 colour deck must be created. If you don't have this many cards, buy some more. The Revised Edition cards are the most important, so the first 100 cards should be of the revised edition.

KNOW YOUR COLLECTION

The first rule of deck construction is organisation and knowledge. You must know what cards you have, and where they are. There are several ways to organise your cards. The easiest method is to arrange the cards in colours, then alphabetical order. Stored in boxes, with the mana next to them, it becomes fairly simple to locate the cards you need. Think of Artifacts and Multilands as the same colour, and put them together. Store cards from expansion sets together, away from revised cards. Use starter pack boxes to store mana and to divide the colours. Mark on the starter pack boxes the colour of mana stored within.

If you intend to mainly play tournament legal packs, when you sort out your cards check that you haven't got more than four of any card. Having too many multiples takes up valuable space, and I am sure that you can find a poor friend to give them to (especially if you happen to have 700 Atogs, heh! heh!). I only keep more than four of a card if it is rare, and only for trading purposes. I know sorting cards into alphabetical order and colour is long and tedious, but the rewards are immediately apparent. It becomes easier find your cards, and as long as when you disassemble your decks back into alphabetical order, aside from the first sort, this is fairly quick.

Another way of sorting your cards is in rarity, colour and alphabetical order. This is not as efficient in box format, but if you store your cards in files in plastic card sleeves, it works very well. A great advantage of sleeves is all of your cards are displayed, and as each slot can easily hold four cards, your whole collection can be stored in one file. I store my cards like this. I have four sections in my file. The first two are for common and uncommon respectively, and they are arranged in colour and alphabetical order. The third section is for my multilands and "weird stuff" (*Legends*, & *Antiquities*), and the fourth is for my rarest cards. I also bought a card checklist and marked off the number of cards I had on it. I have *Fallen Empires*, and *The Dark* are stored in a separate file.

TAKE SIXTY CARDS

Now take a look through your sorted cards and decide which two colours (or three, four or even five if you are feeling particularly masochistic) are your most powerful. Separate these colours out. Now from each colour (try to stick with two to start with) you must have ten creatures and ten spells (I refer to spells as any non-summon spell). Of the creatures, select four weenies (weenies are creatures with a summoning cost two or less). Let's assume we're constructing a Red/Green deck; from red, I select an AtoG, Mons

Goblin Raiders, a Goblin Balloon Brigade, and a Kird Ape; from Green I select Grizzly Bears, Llanowar Elves, Scryb Sprites and Shanodin Dryads. Weenies are useful as you can get them out quickly to defend while waiting for enough mana to cast the big creatures.

Now select two Walls from each colour, something to take damage, eg. Wall of Brambles and Wall of Stone. The next step is to select mid-range creatures, those that take 3 to 5 mana to cast. Pick three of each colour. Make sure they are moderately powerful, or have a special ability (Royal Assassin definitely does count here). Things like Ironroot Treefolk, War Mammoth, Hill Giant, Stone Giant, etc. Finally, pick one big creature from each colour, something like a Craw Wurm, or Shivan Dragon.

Selecting non-summoning spells is more difficult. There are just so many different spells to choose from. A quick guideline is to select five *enchancements* or *instants*, and five *sorceries* or *interrupts*. Of those you select, two out of five should be utility spells (spells which do not directly effect you or your opponent, but provide some benefit or advantage like Tranquillity, Wild Growth, Fog, etc.). The other three can be cards like Fireball, Firebreathing, Giant Growth, etc. These spells directly effect your opponent, yourself or creatures.

Finally take 20 mana, ten of each colour. Multilands can also be included of the appropriate types. If you have an interesting artifact or two that you wish to add, add them by all means, taking out cards on a one for one basis. For an artifact creature, exchange an equivalent creature; for other artifacts, remove a non-creature spell. Personally, I rarely use artifacts, I tend to count them as a colour unto themselves, ie. I play Green/Artifact as a two-colour deck.

The deck you have just made is an "All-Rounder". It is a medium-lightweight deck, and suffers simply because of its lack of specific attacks. For the beginner player, or one who wishes to try out a new set of cards, a deck like this is a good place to start. An example of the all-rounder follows, using only common and uncommon cards.

Deck type: All-Rounder

No. of cards: 60

Colours: Green/Red

Artifacts: None

Expansion sets: None

Green:

2 Scryb Sprites	1 Wild Growth
2 Grizzly Bears	2 Giant Growth
1 Wall of Brambles	1 Fog
1 Wall of Ice	1 Regeneration
2 War Mammoths	2 Tranquillity
1 Thicket Basilisk	2 Stream of Life
1 Craw Wurm	1 Regrowth

Red:

2 Kird Apes	2 Firebreathing
2 Goblin Balloon Brigades	2 Orcish Oriflamme
1 Wall of Fire	1 Tunnel
1 Wall of Stone	1 Shatterstorm
1 Dwarven Warriors	2 Disintegrate
2 Hill Giants	1 Earthbind
1 Fire Elemental	1 Fireball



AUSTRALIAN REALMS/STEVE JACKSON GAMES DESIGN-A-CARD-COMPETITION

YOU COULD WIN

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AUTOGRAPHED BY **STEVE JACKSON**
AND THE ARTISTS

Your mission, Bruce and/or Sheila, should you wish to accept it: We want you to design an Australian card for the first expansion set of *Illuminati New World Order* (to be released at Gencon 95). All you have to do is come up with a special ability, and a good illustration for a card with a distinctive Australian feel. For non-artists, a DESCRIPTION of the illustration will be fine, but the judges might be more impressed by actual art (or a significant bribe).

Mission Leader Steve Jackson says: "Remember: Humor and irony are the essence of the game. If we wanted a BORING card, there are lots of card game designers out there who we could go to (insert nasty smile here). Make me laugh."

Your reward, should you complete the mission to our satisfaction: Best overall entry gets a complete Limited Edition *INWO* set, with the Illuminati cards autographed by Steve Jackson and the artists who did the illustrations. Second place is an *INWO* Factory Set, with the box autographed by some of the chief perpetrators. Honorable mentions granted and rewarded at the whim of the Illuminati, who can be generous when they're amused.

Mission Parameters: All entries should be sent to mission control (*Australian Realms*, PO Box 220, Morley, Western Australia, 6943) by 10 May 1995. Entries will be forwarded to *Steve Jackson Games* for judging. All entries become the property of *SJ Games*, which is free to use them, ignore them, or mangle them beyond recognition.

This competition will self-destruct in five seconds... beep.... beep... beep... beep... Still here, you drongo? Get on with it!

THE KILLER DECK

The trick with designing the killer deck is goal. There has to be some goal the deck is specifically designed to do. Name one person who has not thought of making a Plague Rat deck. This is a deck with 40 plague rats, and 20 swamps. Yes, I know it isn't tournament legal, but everyone has considered it. What is the point of this deck? Basically to make 20/20 plague rats to really annoy the heck out of your opponent. True?

A basic rule of killer deck construction can be seen here. The objective or goal of the Plague Rat deck is to have huge 20/20 creatures overwhelm your opponent. Other decks can be made to deprive your opponent of mana, or to steal everything your opponent brings out, or to make sure your opponent has no cards in his hand, or to blast your opponent for 20 points of damage in the first round (yes, this is possible.). You set yourself an objective, or style of play and then design the deck to do the job.

Say I want a deck to kill all my opponents creatures and do damage to him without actually taking damage myself, or losing my own creatures. A Pestilence Deck will do this. Now there are two big problems with Pestilence. 1) It does damage to yourself and your creatures. 2) It is destroyed if there are no creatures on table. So, how do you get around this? For yourself, Circle of Protection Black will work quite well. Now your creatures all have to be *black warded* or be *regenerating*. This solves the second problem as well. So, a list of cards so far (I always take cards in groups of four, so you need 10 groups of cards to make up 40 cards not including mana): Pestilence, C.O.P. Black, White Knight, Drudge Skeletons, and Wall of Bone. We need 5 more sets of cards. Going to *Fallen Empires*, *Order of Liebuter* also has protection from black, so include them. Four more. How about a source of quick black mana? Stick in *Dark Ritual*. Now we need a relatively big creature, and something to protect it so take *Sengir Vampires* or *Serra Angels*, and black wards. One set left. Black's arch-enemy is *Karma* and *Lifeforce*, so toss in *Disenchants*.

Deck Type: Pestilence Deck

No. of Cards: 60

Colours: Black/White

Artifacts: None

Expansion sets: *Fallen Empires*

Black:

4 Pestilence
4 Dark Rituals
4 Drudge Skeletons
4 Wall of Bone
4 Sengir Vampires

White:

4 C.O.P. Black
4 White Knights
4 Order of Leitbur
4 Black Wards
4 Disenchants

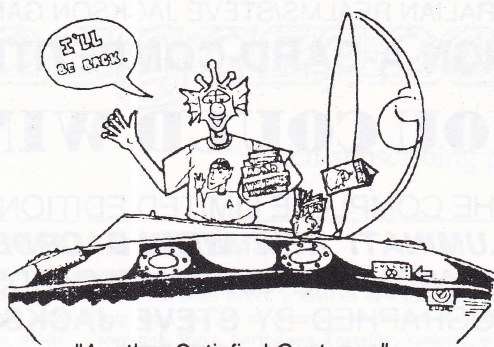
Okay, so some of you don't have four each of all of these cards, but by following these guidelines, you can start collecting cards that will work well for you.

Other cards that might be put into the Pestilence Deck are in green like *Wall of Brambles* and *Regeneration*, however this means making the deck three colours. This deck is a great anti-creature deck, especially if your opponent is playing weenie hordes or thallids. It's main disadvantage is its lack of protection against flying creatures, and no life-gaining spells; perhaps putting in *Drain Life* instead of *Sengir Vampires* might solve this. Also the creatures are not all that powerful, but are regenerating; maybe putting in some *Will-o-the-Wisp's* is the way to go (unfortunately rare). So perhaps the thing to do is to take out *Sengir Vampires* and *Black Wards*, and add in *Will-O-The-Wisp's* and *Drain Life*. It is up to you.

MORE NEXT ISSUE

Okay, that's it for this issue. Don't forget to sort your cards and design a few decks based on these guidelines. Let me know how you get on (you mail me at the regular *Australian Realms* address).

Till next issue, this is your friendly planes walker signing off. ■



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Fallen Empires

CHECKLIST

KEY

Types

- ART - Artifact
- ECR - Enchant Creature
- ELA - Enchant Land
- ENC - Enchantment
- INS - Instant
- LAN - Land
- SOR - Sorcery
- SUM - Summon Creature

Rarity

- C - Common
- U - Uncommon
- R - Rare

ARTIFACTS

Name	Type	Rarity	✓
Aeolipile	ART	R	□
Balm of Restoration	ART	R	□
Conch Horn	ART	R	□
Delf's Cone	ART	R	□
Delf's Cube	ART	R	□
Draconian Cylix	ART	R	□
Elven Lyre	ART	R	□
Implements of Sacrifice	ART	R	□
Ring of Renewal	ART	R	□
Spirit Shield	ART	R	□
Zelyon Sword	ART	R	□

BLACK

Name	Type	Rarity	✓
Armor Thrull	SUM	C	□
Basal Thrull	SUM	C	□
Breeding Pit	ENC	U	□
Drelor	SUM	R	□
Ebon Praetor	SUM	R	□
Hymn To Tourach	SOR	C	□
Initiates of Ebon Hand	SUM	C	□
Mindstab Thrull	SUM	C	□
Necrite	SUM	C	□
Order of Ebon Hand	SUM	C	□
Soul Exchange	SOR	U	□
Thrull Champion	SUM	R	□
Thrull Retainer	ECR	U	□
Thrull Wizard	SUM	U	□
Tourach's Chant	ENC	U	□
Tourach's Gate	ELA	R	□

BLUE

Name	Type	Rarity	✓
Deep Spawn	SUM	U	□
High Tide	INS	C	□
Homarid	SUM	C	□
Homarid Shaman	SUM	R	□
Homarid Spawning Bed	ENC	U	□
Homarid Warrior	SUM	C	□
Merseine	ECR	C	□
River Merfolk	SUM	R	□
Seasinger	SUM	U	□
Syvelunite Priest	SUM	U	□
Tidal Flats	ENC	C	□
Tidal Influences	ENC	U	□
Vodallian Knights	SUM	R	□
Vodallian Mage	SUM	C	□
Vodallian Soldiers	SUM	C	□
Vodallian War Machine	SUM	R	□

GREEN

Name	Type	Rarity	✓
Elven Fortress	ENC	C	□
Elvish Farmer	SUM	R	□
Elvish Hunter	SUM	C	□
Elvish Hunter	SUM	C	□
Feral Thallid	SUM	U	□
Fungal Bloom	ENC	R	□
Night Soil	ENC	C	□
Spore Cloud	INS	C	□
Spore Flower	SUM	U	□
Thallid	SUM	C	□
Thallid Devourer	SUM	U	□
Thelonite Druid	SUM	U	□
Thelonite Monk	SUM	R	□
Thelon's Chant	ENC	U	□
Thelon's Curse	ENC	R	□
Thorn Thallid	SUM	C	□

RED

Name	Type	Rarity	✓
Brassclaw Orcs	SUM	C	□
Dwarven Armorer	SUM	R	□
Dwarven Catapult	INS	U	□
Dwarven Lieutenant	SUM	U	□
Dwarven Soldier	SUM	C	□
Goblin Chirurgeon	SUM	C	□
GoANblin Grenade	SOR	C	□
Goblin Flotilla	SUM	R	□
Goblin Kites	ENC	U	□
Goblin War Drums	ENC	C	□
Goblin Warrens	ENC	R	□
Orcish Captain	SUM	U	□
Orcish Spy	SUM	C	□
Orcish Veteran	SUM	C	□
Orrg	SUM	R	□
Raiding Party	ENC	U	□

RED

Name	Type	Rarity	✓
Combat Medic	SUM	C	□
Farrelite Priest	SUM	U	□
Farrel's Mantle	ECR	U	□
Farrel's Zealot	SUM	C	□
Hand of Justice	SUM	R	□
Heroism	ENC	U	□
Icatian Infantry	SUM	C	□
Icatian Javellineers	SUM	C	□
Icatian Lieutenant	SUM	R	□
Icatian Moneychanger	SUM	C	□
Icatian Phalanx	SUM	U	□
Icatian Priest	SUM	U	□
Icatian Scout	SUM	C	□
Icatian Skimishers	SUM	R	□
Icatian Town	SOR	R	□
Order of Leitbur	SUM	U	□

LAND

Name	Type	Rarity	✓
Bottomless Vault	LAN	R	□
Dwarven Hold	LAN	R	□
Dwarven Ruins	LAN	U	□
Ebon Stronghold	LAN	U	□
Havenwood Battleground	LAN	U	□
Hollow Trees	LAN	R	□
Icatian Store	LAN	R	□
Rainbow Vale	LAN	R	□
Ruins of Trokair	LAN	U	□
Sand Silos	LAN	R	□
Syvelunite Temple	LAN	U	□

CARD MAGIC

TRADE OF THE YEAR AWARD

The early leader in the 1995 Card Magic Magazine Trade of the Year Award has got to be Sam. At a trading session at the Tactics, Perth store, Sam overheard Paul trading with a third party and being asked what he'd trade his precious Shivan Dragon for. Paul replied "This card is worth 700 Atogs." Sam stepped forward and said "I'll do that trade." Paul accepted given the unlikelihood of Sam ever having 700 Atogs, and the deal was struck. To collect his 700 Atogs, Sam asked that Tactics put up a sign asking for donations of Atogs. As the weeks went by the stack of Atogs grew and grew until Sam eventually had the 700 he needed for the trade, and so the Shivan Dragon and Paul parted company. Well done, Sam!

If you think you can beat that trade, tell us and we'll give away the Trade of The Year Award and PRIZE to the best entry.

MAGIC

The Gathering

CARD MAGIC's Top Twenty Most Desired Cards

One of the great attractions of Magic: The Gathering and other collectible trading card games is the huge variety of cards you get to select your playing deck from. Every player has her own preferences, her own tactics and her own tricky card combinations. By leaving card selection open to the players, Richard Garfield has cunningly put every one of us in the position of game designer.

The following list (taken from Revised Edition only) is not meant to be an exclusive and final judgement on what are the best twenty cards to play, but the observations of the Card Magic team on what cards most seem to be desired by Magic players in the clubs and shops around Australia. We are happy to hear your opinions of what you think might better fit this list. Write to us.

1. **Lightning Bolt** - delivers quick damage very cheaply.
2. **Multilands, any type** - if you have to clog your deck with land, it might as well generate multi-purpose mana.
3. **Fireball** - more quick and devastating damage - don't you just love playing red. Hormone overload!
4. **Dark Ritual** - a cheap source of mana.
5. **Sol Ring** - another cheap, reusable mana source.
6. **Demonic Tutor** - where is that Serra Angel hiding? Find out and get in your hand quickly with this clever dude.
7. **Regrowth** - your opponent dispatches one of your favourite cards... but it soon returns if you have this card.
8. **Fork** - a brilliant card which enables you to duplicate any sorcery - yours or your opponent's. Opportunity knocks.
9. **Birds of Paradise** - its a creature, its cheap to play and its a source of any colour mana. May it fly up your nose!
10. **Llanowar Elves** - another mana generator, green.
11. **Serra Angel** - is it a bird? is it a plane? no its Serra Angel. She's tough, she looks good and she don't turn her back on you after she attacks (doesn't tap).
12. **Juggernaut** - relatively cheap to cast (four colourless mana) and... its out of control and its coming your way...
13. **Disintegrate** - select any target or creature to destroy it and powered it up with as much mana as you can generate.
14. **Black Vise** - squeezes 'em where it hurts - in the hands, in the hands. To play it early have the Demonic Tutor handy.
15. **Howling Mine** - both players get to draw an extra card each turn - he with the smallest deck loses!
16. **Counterspell** - a great all-purpose defensive card.
17. **Terror** - the bigger they are, the harder they fall when this unsavoury dude turns up.
18. **Sengir Vampire** - its big, it gets bigger, its flying and it eats Serra Angels for breakfast.
19. **Ivory Tower** - a life generator when times are tough.
20. **Hypnotic Specter** - a good flying creature with the added feature of when it does damage you get to remove a card from your opponent's hand. Now, get him on the Rack.

So there you have it, the Card Magic Top Twenty desirable cards. The fun part is collecting enough of them to ensure they are drawn regularly, and combining them with the other stuff you need to create a properly balanced deck. Ah, choices, choices... isn't the life of a Planes Walker fun?

CARD MAGIC's Top Twenty Tradable Cards

The top twenty desirable cards from a playing point of view does not necessarily match up with the top twenty cards from a trading point of view. The artwork on the cards and their rarity also affects the marketability of the cards.

The prices shown here are purely for reference only and do not represent an offer to buy or sell. We sourced several shops around Australia and these are the top twenty cards from the Revised Edition which are trading for around these listed prices:

1. Shivan Dragon	\$25.00 (700Atogs)
2. Fork	\$20.00
3. Nightmare	\$15.00
4. Demonic Hordes	\$15.00
5. Force of Nature	\$15.00
6. Royal Assassin	\$15.00
7. Multilands, any	\$12.00
8. Personal Incarnation	\$10.00
9. Versuvian Doppelganger	\$10.00
10. Howling Mines	\$10.00
11. Lord of the Pit	\$10.00
12. Mahamoti Djinn	\$10.00
13. Goblin King	\$10.00
14. Bad Moon	\$10.00
15. Crusade	\$10.00
16. Lord of Atlantis	\$10.00
17. Mana Flare	\$10.00
18. Jayemdae Tome	\$8.00
19. Meekstone	\$8.00
20. Veteran Bodyguard	\$8.00

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Women of the High Seas

Written and Illustrated by Louise Pieper and Tonia Walden

*With pitch and tar their hands were hard
Tho' once like velvet, soft,
They weigh'd the anchor, heav'd the lead,
And boldly went aloft.*

- Old Sea Ballad

Women On The High Seas

Women aboard ship were considered taboo to many seafarers, the reason being that women on board supposedly bring bad luck. More accurately, it probably would be the disruptive element of jealousy among the crew that would cause the trouble. However this was not always the case, as there are examples throughout history of famous female pirates. For instance, the Irish pirate Grace O'Malley (Graine Mhaol - "Grace of the cropped hair") was active in the 1560s. She was born to a seafaring family and had a passionate love for the sea. She eventually married two great Irish chieftains and used her fleet to fight the English.

Another notable example is the Chinese pirate leader Ching Yih Saou who lived in the early 1800s. After the death of her husband she took command of his massive pirate fleet which grew in size and power until it consisted of over 800 junks and 1000 smaller vessels. Her fleet held coastal China in a state of terror, until internal fighting caused the fleet to break apart and she surrendered to the authorities.

In some cases women disguised themselves as men, to escape the restrictions that society placed upon them, and in this guise could pursue activities "not befitting a woman". Captain Charles Johnson in his "General History of the robberies and murders of the most notorious pirates" first recounted the story of two such women who donned male clothing and went to sea in swashbuckling style, the female pirates of the Caribbean - Mary Read and Anne Bonney.

Pirates of the Caribbean

Piracy had spread along the coast of newly colonised New England (America) by the seventeenth century. The reason for the rapid increase in piracy was the invasion of the New World by Spain. The immensely wealthy Spanish ships carried home the treasure of the Aztecs - gold silver, jewels, bullion and other items. This treasure was too great a temptation to the pirates, buccaneers, and privateers employed by the English and French, who were often fuelled by a hatred of the Spanish as well. "Buccaneer" eventually became an all-embracing term for these seafarers who gathered in the Caribbean, and although the distinction between them was blurred, as some pirates became privateers and vice versa, differences did exist.

Buccaneers or "the Brethren of the coast" existed only in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, off the coast of America, and they robbed only Spanish ships. In this they were different from

pirates, who considered ships of any nationality fair game. Of course, buccaneers were considered common pirates and thieves by the aggrieved Spanish. The buccaneers came into being after the Spanish had deserted their settlement in Hispaniola, to seek further fortunes in Mexico and Peru. The Spaniards left behind herds of cattle and pigs and this ready food source encouraged French and English sailors to settle on the otherwise deserted island. These vagabonds were soon joined by escaped criminals, runaway slaves, and deserters from privateer ships. They acquired the name buccaneers because of the "boucan", a wooden barbecue with which they used to smoke meat. The buccaneers formed new settlements, and, being accomplished seafarers, traded and became quite popular with the colonists. The Spanish government soon tried to get rid of them; they destroyed an English settlement forcing the inhabitants to take to the sea and become pirates.

Privateers manned armed vessels with the express authority of the government of Jamaica to capture the ships of enemy nations. As holders of "the letter of marque and reprisal" they could not be charged with piracy under international law, but often they were not much more than government-sanctioned pirates. It was common for pirates to become privateers in times of war, as this was an inexpensive way for governments to acquire fighting ships and crews. Privateers would go into battle with the flag of their nation, while pirates hoisted the black flag.

Port Royal

In 1655 the English, assisted by the buccaneers, took possession of Jamaica in the West Indies. The town of Port Royal, on the south coast of Jamaica, soon became a welcome haven for buccaneers as the English governors of this island readily passed out letters of marque, allowing the buccaneers to be officially sanctioned to attack Spanish ships and property. The English correctly surmised that the presence of the buccaneers would act as a powerful deterrent, protecting Port Royal from attack by Spanish ships. Under this cozy arrangement, English government officials and bankers in Jamaica would receive a share of any plunder taken from the Spanish, and buccaneer leaders were often treated with great respect by them, and some even as heroes. However *pirates* who would not limit themselves to robbing only the Spanish were executed; Gallows Point at Port Royal was used for such executions.

Port Royal flourished for thirty years as a seaport with about 6500 inhabitants. It acquired an infamous reputation for debauchery until it was devastated by a massive earthquake that sunk two-thirds of the town and killed two thousand people. The destruction of the town was widely considered "God's judgement upon that wicked place".

The seas of the Caribbean were so remote from Europe and England that it was very difficult for the foreign kings to control piracy. It was not until the 1700 that laws were introduced against pirates in those waters, but as some of the pirates were considered benefactors to the colonists because of the trade they brought in, it was often hard to apprehend and convict them. The practice of offering free pardons was quite common, with the conditions being that the pirates would surrender to authority and swear to give up their piracy. As you can imagine, this expedient was not always successful as the pirates would be all too eager to take the pardon when the navy was getting dangerously close to capturing them, but as soon as money ran out the pirates would swiftly revert to their former ways.

Anne Bonney and Mary Read

Mary Read was born at Plymouth around 1690. Her mother had pretended that Mary was a boy to claim an inheritance and Mary continued to wear male clothing throughout her life. When she was thirteen she worked as a servant but grew tired of this and signed up for the crew of a man-o-war as a cabin boy. She later joined the French army in Flanders and met a young soldier with whom she fell in love and married. They opened an inn near Breda and for a short while they were happy. After the war, the trading became poor and her husband died of sickness. Mary decided that she should leave and she rejoined the army, again enlisting as a man. She then deserted to join the crew of a Dutch vessel headed for the West Indies - which was rife with piracy. Sure enough the ship was attacked by English pirates and after examining Mary's papers, that disclosed she was the only "Englishman" on board, they forced her to join their crew. Among the pirate crew she distinguished herself with her courage and fighting ability.

The laws against piracy were relaxed in 1717 when Captain Woodes Rogers became governor of Jamaica. Captain Rogers had specific instructions to try and stop piracy in America and he was allowed to offer the pardon to those who would give themselves up to the authorities. This was the largest mass pardoning to ever occur, as 2000 pirates were convinced to surrender and stop their activities. Mary Read's ship was among those to return to New Providence island in the Bahamas, to take the pardon.

At about the same time another female pirate was also taking the pardon. Anne Bonney was born in Cork in Ireland, the illegitimate daughter of a lawyer. Her father emigrated to Carolina and became a wealthy planter. She was a spirited girl, and once rejected the advances of an admirer so vigorously that he was said not to be able to walk for a week. Eventually she married the handsome but penniless seaman James Bonney. Her father was furious and threw her out of the house and the two of them moved to New Providence. It was in the Bahamas that she met the notorious pirate Captain John Rackham, also known as "Calico Jack" because of his colourful cotton costumes. He convinced her to dress as a man and join his pirate ship to accompany him on a tour of piracy. Anne fell pregnant, and was put ashore at Cuba for some time, but she was soon back at sea again. They continued to sail the West Indies and went on to Bermuda. When the pardon for pirates was offered, they too sailed back to New Providence Island. However, their money soon disappeared and with Anne in disguise again, they signed up as privateers.

They joined the Governor of Jamaica's sloop on raids against the Spanish, but Rackham led a mutiny in order to seize control of the ship. One of the mutineers was a handsome young sailor, and Anne Bonney was quite attracted to him. She made it known to him that she was in fact a woman, but to her surprise, "he" revealed that "he" was a woman too. It was Mary Read who also had joined the privateers after she had taken the pardon. Mary fell in love with the pilot of the sloop and married him. When her lover was challenged to a duel, it was Mary who fought on his behalf and she ran the man through with her cutlass.

The ship continued to cruise the coast of Jamaica, raiding anchorages and attacking coastal trading vessels. The pirates had been drinking heavily when they noticed a British Naval vessel bearing down on them. Captain Barnet had been commissioned by the Governor of Jamaica to track down Rackham and deliver him for trial. It was a fairly simple task for the marines and sailors to board the ship, as the pirates were drunk and they had retreated below deck. Bonney and Read both drew their cutlasses and fought ferociously, cursing their shipmates who were cowering in the

hold. Rackham and his crew were captured and taken to St. Jago de la Vega for trial. The judge asked if there was any reason the death sentence should not be enforced. Anne and Mary surprised him by replying "My Lord, we plead our bellies". They were both pregnant and the judge spared them from the gallows, but the rest of the pirates were not so lucky. Anne visited Calico Jack in gaol and told him "she was sorry to see him there, but if he had fought like a man, he need not have been hanged like a dog", and shortly afterwards he was hung at Gallows Point. Mary died of a fever in prison, but Anne's fate is unknown. It was thought that her father had her taken back to Carolina, as she was no longer in prison a year later, and was never heard of again.

Character Profiles

At the height of their careers of piracy, both women were in their late twenties. They could pass themselves off as young men and wore loose fitting sailor's clothes and hats or scarves to keep their hair bound down (just as the male pirates did). The common weapons pirates used were the musket, pistol, sword and boarding axe and it seems that both Anne and Mary were proficient with these weapons and reputed to be fierce fighters. Both women sought adventure and were prepared to take great risks to live the life they had chosen. Perhaps because they knew what they were risking, they were more cautious than their shipmates, but still showed a strong sense of bravery and wit all their lives.

Plot Hooks (not just pirate hooks...)

Any time the characters are on board a ship, or near a port, there is an opportunity to have them meet up with the two high-spirited pirate women -

Pirate Attack

The party may be sailors or passengers on board a trading ship when they notice a ship passing close by. To the horror of the characters, this ship pulls in close and raises the black flag - it is a pirate vessel and too close for their ship to outrun. Pirates fought under a black flag with skull and crossed daggers or similar design - the characters should consider themselves lucky, as the black flag means quarter would be given in battle while the dreaded red flag, which was associated with piracy from early times, means no quarter would be given.

The pirates then attack. Contrary to the swashbuckling movies, pirates preferred to attack by coming alongside and firing at the crew and helmsman - in one pirate attack the pirates wedged the rudder of the attacked ship so it could no longer steer. The characters will probably resist, but it is up to the gamemaster to decide if they can defeat the pirates. If they are overwhelmed by the ferocity of the pirate onslaught and captured, they may be chained and mocked, as the pirates get progressively drunk on rum punch to celebrate their victory. Although the characters may be worried about being made to walk the plank, this never was a pirate punishment. The characters may wait for their chance to escape and turn the tables on the drunken pirates, but the two pirates who remain sober, Mary and Anne, will have to be dealt with. Perhaps they can bargain their way out, as the two women were tough but not stupid.

In The Navy

The characters are press-ganged into the Navy to fight against the pirate threat. This was a common occurrence to make up numbers in the Navy, (to compensate for all the desertions), and usually involved a drunken individual being blackjacked from behind on their way home from the tavern, and waking up with a headache on board one of His Majesty's ships which is already at sea. They should be distraught to find out they are now in the service of His Majesty's navy. If the navy ship they are now serving on gets into a fight with the pirates, the sea battle could go either way, but if Mary and Anne are captured by the Navy, they will plead with the characters to help them escape and since that's probably just what the characters were planning to do as well, they should make a good team. If the naval vessel, (and the characters), are captured by the pirates, they would probably prefer to be pirates anyway and just have to convince their captors of their sincerity.

Marooned

Whichever way they end up on board a ship with the women pirates, the referee can keep in mind the old seamen's superstitions about women on ships. If Anne and Mary are revealed to be women, they could be in trouble. The characters may then be called on to help them maintain their male disguise, or to help them guard their backs if they have to fight their way safely off the ship, without being keelhauled. If the party escape successfully (or are unceremoniously marooned) it would probably be in a small rowboat and, of course, the nearest land is only a small deserted island - the perfect place for adventure. Unfriendly (cannibalistic) natives, buried pirate treasure, lost civilisations (the Americas were largely unexplored) and every other swashbuckling cliché could keep them so busy on the island they won't even notice the Spanish landing party claiming "their" island as part of the glorious Greater Spanish empire.

Port Royal

If the characters need a taste of Port Royal's "high society" they could meet Anne and Mary in the excitement of a good old fashioned tavern brawl - like all good pirates Anne and Mary like singing and drinking at the local dockside taverns. If things get a little out of hand, they will heartily pitch into the fight with everyone else. One of the characters may discover in the course of the fight that their opponent is a woman, but if they pull their punches as a result they may not be able to walk for a week.

The Old Sea Bitch

For an encounter with more pathos than punches the characters could meet Anne after it is all over with her pirating days - Calico Jack has been hung and Mary is dead. Anne is older but not wiser and she is bored with a respectable life at her father's plantation. She wants to go back to the sea again and is eager to recruit the characters to be her crew.

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How Banner Train There Troops.....(A (very) short story.)

"Recruit Ballan Bannersbane, perhaps you would be kind enough to state basic Banner ideology."

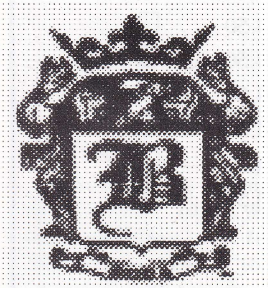
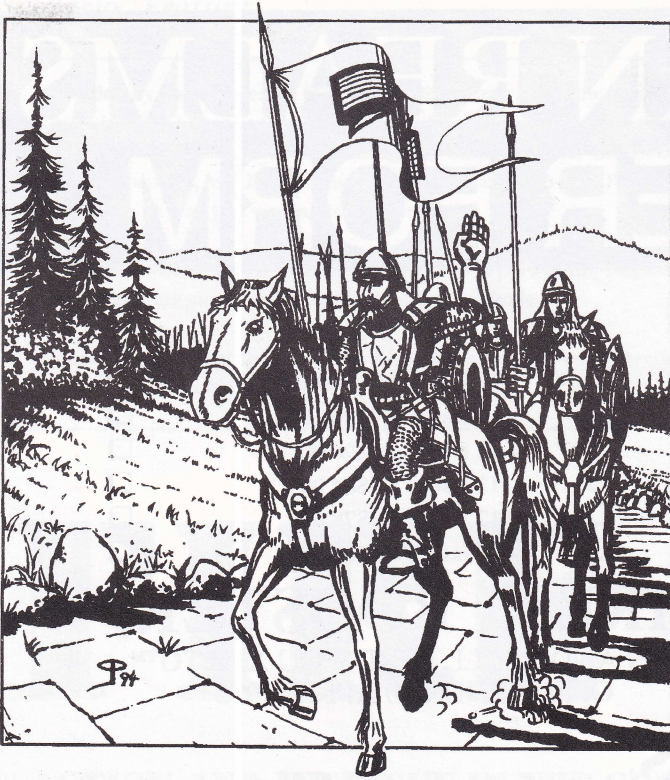
The recruit drew himself stiffly to attention. His braids had been shaved off down to a bare fuzz on his scalp.

"SIR, politically correct BANNER ideology is as follows." Ballan Bannersbane pointed at his fellow boot-camp trainees. "If you're smaller than me, I'm in charge here. If you're bigger than me - you're in charge, and if something's gone wrong, he's in charge!"

"Very good!" The hot sun glinted from the follower's round, wire-rimmed spectacles. His ears twitched dangerously. He removed a small notepad from his greatcoat's pocket and scribbled a few words. "You. Owen The Red. Name a test to determine whether a recruit is fit to become a Banner retainer."

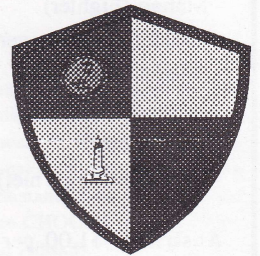
The man scratched his trimmed beard. "The recruit is tied-" He hastily corrected himself "The recruit volunteers to be tied to a sabre-toothed tiger and shut up in it's cave. If the recruit come out, he passed. If the tiger comes out, he failed. If he comes out riding the sabre-toothed tiger, make him a Follower."

"Excellent." the Follower's unnatural golden eyes gleamed, "Excellent..."



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TO THE VILLAGE BORN

Everyday Life In A Medieval Village

by Brad Martin

Thud the Barbarian and his five brigands sauntered past a sign announcing the name of the village up ahead. None of them could read, so they didn't spare it a glance. But then, one village was the same as the next. They walked into the Weapons Shop, took down three bastard-swords (cleansing dungeons of orc-hordes was hard on bladed weapons) from the self-serve rack, paid at the check-out, and then crossed to the General Store. There they each bought a pre-packed Adventurer's Kit and two weeks of Iron Rations. At the Gem Dealers they exchanged piles of near useless (and bloody heavy) brass coinage, and some obscure artifacts, for a bagful of shiny opals. Business completed - Thud led his men into the Tavern for some beer, food and wenches.

Thud's interaction with this nameless village is typical of that of many player-characters. They see villages as being places of re-victualling and re-equipping, or alternatively as targets for pillage and rapine. They see the inhabitants of a village as having no humanity, and consequently treat them as disposable commodities. These perceptions are reinforced by referee failure to create a living community. Non-player characters (NPCs) are often generated randomly at the moment of contact with a player, they are made to react stereotypically, and disappear after the player character moves on. The village community does not have any reason for its existence. The infrastructure, economy, and politics are typically arbitrary and disconnected from the milieu.

If role-players want more than to adventure in a one-dimensional 'hack and slash' environment, then they should encourage their referee to follow the guidelines below. The first section will explain the various physical elements that go into making up a village. The second section will set out the human element that brings a village to life, and includes short descriptions on some of the inhabitants of the village of Geilenhof (50 miles NE of the town of Roddis in Fletland - see issue 16 p.25). This is followed by some ideas for scenarios in a village environment. Hopefully this article will help referees create a realistic quasi-medieval village setting, peopled by NPCs that can have 'real' lives and with which the players can establish long-lasting relationships. A living, evolving, village will become a place that players will wish to return to again and again.

WHAT MAKES A VILLAGE?

A medieval village was more than just a collection of shops for the convenience of passing travellers. It was the home of people who had to scramble and struggle to make a living from the land; the various components of a village were linked to agriculture.

The Fields: The arable land of a village was divided into two or three fields. Each field was a patchwork of furlongs, which were in turn divided into long narrow strips (the standard length of a strip was 220 yards - the optimum distance an oxen team would pull - and its width 5 1/2 yards). Each family was allotted a number of strips sufficient to meet their needs. The strips used by any one family could be scattered over a number of different furlongs - their ownership being marked by boundary stones (there were no fences or hedges). If the needs of a family changed it could be allotted more or fewer strips at the yearly village meeting. The main crops were oats and wheat, and barley in winter.

The Commons: This could consist of fertile river meadows, 'wastelands' and/or woodlands. The villagers had customary rights to graze their animals on these lands. The sheep was the most frequently found grazing animal as its wool provided useful cash when sold. Pigs however, were of more immediate benefit in providing a needed dietary supplement. In late autumn the villagers drove the herd of 20-30 pigs into the woods to fatten them on acorn and beech mast. The Commons also provided grazing for oxen and cattle, wood for fuel and fencing, timber for building, peat for fuel, and fish from streams.

Houses: With an average population of roughly 150 to 300 people, and an average number of inhabitants per peasant household of five, a village would have about 50 dwellings. As well as a dwelling house, each family usually had a building for the animals, a barn and miscellaneous outhouses. Most of these buildings were constructed of an oak or elm framework, filled by wattle and daub walls, and with a thatched roof. Only in highland areas were the buildings of stone. The buildings rested on a plot of land called the toft, which could also have a haystack and a poultry yard. Surrounding the toft was a piece of fenced-off land called the croft. On this land was cultivated garden-crops such as peas and beans. A lane at the back of the croft led to the fields.

Roads: The houses of a village were usually grouped around the village green - a wide open space on which village meetings and the weekly market was held (it also provided a safe area into which the animals could be driven in time of war). Within the village the paths between the houses were of dirt. Only where a village was on a major trade route were the roads gravelled. A lord with the requisite authority would compel the village community to maintain the road.

The Church. This was the largest building in the village and dominated the community. Constructed of stone and with glazed windows, this structure represented certainty and eternity. The three pivotal points in a villager's life - baptism, marriage and death - were sanctified within the church. Attached to the church was the great *tithe* barn. Each peasant paid a tithe of 10%, in the form of hay, corn or wood, and this was stored in the barn until sold off by the Church authorities.

The Manor: A village could come under the jurisdiction of one or more lords. The manor was the organisation through which the lord ensured the flow of income, partly from the demesne (the lord's personal lands), partly from the tenants (rents in money, in kind, or in labour services). The manorial tenants could be of unfree or free status. Those of unfree status were bound to the lord's land,



living in cottages supplied by the lord, and subject to a heavy labour service. Free tenants paid a money rent for the use of the lord's land. The manorial farm consisted of a collection of buildings: a two-storey house with a large hall; granary; kitchen; servant's house; barns; sheep and cattle pens; dove-house; dairy; butchery; kiln; garden; fishpond; pigsty; henhouse and the mill (water or wind powered). Infrastructure such as the mill, was available for the use of the villagers - but at a price.

WHO LIVES IN A VILLAGE?

The Ale-house Keeper: Ale was brewed at home and served at wooden benches in the open air at the front of the Ale-house. The Keeper was frequently a widow, forced to make a living selling ale and food, following the death of her peasant husband. The ale-house was one of the only centres of entertainment for the hard-working villagers. However, the church often frowned on this activity and pressured the bailiff to apply strict controls.

Widow Kempe: A buxom, vivacious woman in her mid-forties, Widow Kempe has never regretted a day since her dullard husband was crushed by a rampaging ox. She relishes keeping abreast of the daily gossip and enjoys flirting with handsome strangers.

The Bailiff: The efficient and profitable management of the lord's demesne was the responsibility of the bailiff of the manor. He ensured that the lord's tenants fulfilled all their obligations. The main way of doing this was through the monthly Manor Court held in the hall of the Manor House. The bailiff recorded the proceedings of the Court in the Court Rolls, which were used by the itinerant assize judges to determine the 'custom of the manor'. Some of the more common cases were: ale-tasters not doing their duty, allowing animals to wander into the fields, encroachment on a neighbour's strip, failure to repair the king's highway, eavesdropping, not belonging to a tithing (each boy at the age of twelve had to be enrolled in a tithing - a group of ten households, used for administrative purposes). Apart from fines, the traditional

punishments for minor offences were: the ducking stool, the pillory, or a journey in the tumbrel (muck-cart).

Johann Tessler: The bailiff is a gruff, overweight, red-faced man. He is a man driven by his sense of duty. All obligations and labours must be met, every item must be tallied and accounted for. However, he is also scrupulously honest and fair - not demanding anything that is not within the customs of the manor.

The Baker: The first task of the day was to fetch a loaf of freshly baked bread from the bakery. The baker had to complete a seven year apprenticeship and was a skilled artisan. Bread was usually of the dark wholemeal type - only the well-off could insist on white bread made from milled wheat.

Horst: A tall, bald man, constantly worried about how he is going to make ends meet and how to feed his nine children. Recently he has taken to adulterating his bread with sawdust.

The Blacksmith: One of the few people in the village who did not work directly on the land. He was a skilled artisan who had served a long apprenticeship - normally under his father. His products such as tackle for draught animals, fittings for wagons, scythes, wool shears, and stone chisels were vital to the agricultural prosperity of the village.

Mattias the Smith: In his early twenties and just married to the beautiful Isabelle. Eager to learn new techniques, he's negotiating the purchase of an improved furnace from a merchant in Migell.

The Churchwardens: Two of these officials were elected by the community each year. As the positions were unpaid (expenses were covered by a rate levied on wealthier villagers) and demanded much time, the churchwardens were usually men of substance. Originally the churchwardens were responsible for keeping the church clean and in good repair, ensuring that sacrifices were available for the service, and that the church officers received their stipends. In time, however, the churchwardens became responsible for a myriad of community tasks. They were overseers of the poor,

arranged the burial of paupers, removed beggars and strangers from the village, apprenticed orphans, maintained the 'town house' (for the benefit of travellers), and paid a bounty on the heads of any pests brought in.

Arie Boer: A wealthy peasant with ambition. Since being elected churchwarden he has come to see himself as the rightful leader of the village. The only obstacle to the realisation of his aim is the other churchwarden, Ilmment Bradden. Boer is plotting to accuse Bradden of being a Sango Drajo heretic.

The Cottar: A semi-free farm-labourer who lived in a 'cot' supplied by his lord. Having no land of his own he was dependent on the lord for wages.

The Guildmaster: The outlay of a penny or two per week would secure protection against old age infirmity and poverty, and provided for a decent funeral. The Guildmaster was responsible for collecting the money and for maintaining the trust fund.

The Miller: The mill was a wooden box-like structure with canvas covered sails balanced on a central post so that it could be turned to face the wind. The miller recorded all grain delivered to be ground into flour - keeping a portion for himself and his lord.

The Peasant: A free man, but subject to the vagaries of life on the land. He had to support his household off less than fifteen acres of land for which he had to pay a money rent. A fairly well-to-do peasant had farming equipment consisting of a cart, a plough, a harrow, a scythe, two axes, a spade, a flail, a mattock, a fork, a bush hook, a gimlet, a sack and a hopper. His household goods consisted of a vat, a cup, a little stand, a brass pot, a pan, a board, a cloth, a chest, a trough, a gridiron, an iron stool, a measure and a wooden beam. Each household usually had only one draught animal and one cow (neighbours would band together to make an oxen team for plowing). The diet of a peasant consisted mainly of oats and barley, with the addition of peas and beans, onions and garlic. Meat and cheese were scarce, eggs were an important source of protein.

Havalde: is a pious hard-working peasant, little concerned with the goings-on beyond the boundaries of the village. A yellow-mould on the stalks of his barley crop has caused him to increase his sacrifices to the White Lady. He eagerly awaits the Festival of Schoperde for the removal of this blight, and is preparing his daughter, Sarantha, for her pivotal role.

The Priest: The most important man in the village. He was responsible for the spiritual and moral life of his 'flock'. He kept track of the passing of time through his calendar. The feast day of the local saint, the holy days and festivals, set the rhythm of village life. The church was a sanctuary for criminals, the parish strongroom, the parish storeroom and armoury, a place of business (where promises made, were more likely to be kept), as well as a place of worship.

Gatlin Bulow: Priest of the goddess Geilan. He is a devout and compassionate man, who through his work with the poor, has established the kirshe of Geilan as a truly holy place.

The Villein: Not a thief, merely a poor farmer, who owned "nothing but his belly". He was essentially a chattel of the lord, doing labour services based on custom, as well as paying rent for working circa 6-10 acres of the lord's land and living in a hovel. Manumission was rare. The most frequent method of escape was to flee to a town. The lord had four days to recapture him, using force if necessary, and after this time had to resort to the law. If the villein remained at liberty for one year and one day, he was deemed to be legally free.

Vanne: A bitter, resentful man - definitely not content with his lot. He was forced to witness the lord deflower his daughter Amy on the night before her marriage. He is preparing to flee to his brother in Roddis, and when free hopes to take legal action against the lord. If that fails, he will seek other means to wreak revenge.

The Warrener: Rabbits breed rapidly and do well on poor ground. They provide meat and furs. The Warrener was charged with protecting the lord's coneygarth from poachers.

VILLAGE SCENARIO HOOKS

1. **THE FESTIVAL OF SCHOPERDE.** The village is covered with greenery, bunting, and flags - it is festival time. The highpoint of celebrations is the fertility ceremony - on a mattress of straw a village virgin and a 'stranger' mate in public. The villagers overwhelmingly acclaim one of the player characters to be the honoured 'stranger'. The virgin is a lithe, dark-haired beauty named Sarantha. The ceremony should be an ecstatic event. However the player character is not told that before sunrise his/her blood will be used to fertilise the fields.

2. **THE HOMECOMING.** Willem has returned from Bayner full of new ideas about 'democracy'. An idealist and blessed with extraordinary personal charm, Willem stirs up passionate feelings in the hearts of any who listen to his harangues against authority. He tries to recruit the player characters into a plot to run the bailiff out of the village and to declare it an autonomous commune.

3. **BABY-SNATCHER.** The village is in uproar. The manor-house is surrounded by an angry mob armed with all manner of farm implements, calling for a woman inside to be handed over for judgement. The woman is a Lady-in-waiting to Duchess Mary Hagen of Migell. She has been sent by her mistress to purchase a boy-child, which will be raised as the Duke's heir. The Lady found an ideal baby and offered a reasonable price. But when the mother refused the Lady snatched the baby and fled to the protection of the bailiff. The mob demand that she be judged by dunking.

4. **BRINGING IN THE SHEAVES.** The men of the village have been levied into the army of the Count of Roddis to repulse the raids of the Gargoyles of Kalraith. But the crop is ripe and must be harvested before it begins to rot. During the harvest, bandits raid the village and the players must join the women of the village to repulse the attack armed only with farm implements.

5. **THE LANCE.** A peasant plowing his strip uncovers an ornate noble's lance. This causes a momentary interest at the alehouse, but the peasants soon return to talking about the weather. A Magic Detection spell, or Sense Magic will reveal that the lance is indeed a magical artefact. The weapon is part of the grave goods of a long dead nobleman. However, to find the remains of the tomb would require the digging up of most of the field. Persuading the peasants to allow this will be very difficult.

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This month I come to you accompanied by Lou Reid, which may, or may not, have a mellowing effect - of course it may just infuse me with an embittered New York cynicism, so lets see shall we?

I don't normally like to write in the daylight hours but the recent heat wave in fair Perth has stricken me with severe circadian disrhythmia, clockwise I don't know my arse from my post meridian. Its cool outside now, the birds are singing (crows actually - sorry guys we'll let you know, Next!), little puffs of cat fur are blowing around my front door from last night's feline fracas and out there in suburbia little people are going to T-ball (What a sad excuse for a game - a typical example of the current democratisation of learning - Real Baseball might let some kids shine, real schooling might make the dummies in the class feel bad. Wake Up! Our Northern Neighbours don't coddle their kids. They don't let their criminals walk the streets, they don't cripple their own economies and they sure as hell don't let dribble like Sea Quest DSV on their TV sets) and all is well in the world. Yeah right.

I feel better. A nice warm up. Okay! You think I'm just whingeing? Then try **The Culture of Complaint** (\$19.95, Harper & Collins) by Robert Hughes (of *Fatal Shore* fame - celebrated Aussie Historian and critic), this guy knows how to WHINGE big time! Its actually a great book, though Bob gets a bit picky and obscure towards the end. Bob dissects American culture (and by implication semi-American cultures like our own) pointing out all the steaming little pustules and tumours that inhabit that great body. If you want to know more about the evil that is Political Correctness (PC to us whingers) then check this one out. I managed to read it under very difficult circumstances: in a tent in Augusta with someone vomiting next to me for two days - try it sometime. Hughes can be scholarly, wordy and dense, he can slap you in the face with the occasional crudity (Aussie to the bone I'd say) or he can amaze with a dazzling pirouette of language. And all that on one page. He challenges with directness while walking a swinging tightrope between the left and right. You should read this book, its my hit pick for the summer. A sample:

"For the young, more and more, entertainment sets educational standards and creates "truth" about the past. Millions of Americans, especially young ones, imagine that the "truth" about the Kennedy assassination resides in Oliver Stone's vivid lying film JFK, with its paranoid elevation of a discredited New Orleans prosecutor into a political hero beset by an evil, omnipresent military that murdered Kennedy to keep us out of

The Analytical Engine

by Peter Crank

100250.3713@compuserve.com

Vietnam. How many of them saw anything wrong with Stone's frequent claim that he was creating a counter-myth to the Warren Commission's findings, as though one's knowledge of the past equated with the propagation of myth?"

Wow! Lets stick it to Oliver Stone! Onya Bob! Rolling Now. **Random Acts of Senseless Violence** (Harper Collins, \$11.95). Jack Womack, cyberpunk and all round nasty guy strikes again. This is great, grim, grimy stuff. Watch Lola slide from pampered 12 year old child of privilege to street kid in 250 pages. This book is Lola's diary; a cyberpunk Anne Frank, she leads us from her penthouse existence downstairs into the streets as daddy loses his job, mommy loses her marbles and Lola her innocence. Not cheerful; no happy endings here, but a logical partner to Hughes's work. Read it, I don't want to spoil it for you.

Here's one that slipped through the cracks last issue (it was sitting in the "lend these to friends, they're relly relly good" pile, instead of the "gotta review this crap, why do I do this job anyway?" pile. **Its The Hot Zone** (Doubleday, \$varies, I actual got the hardcover for \$12 at Target on one of those 12.5 % off days when it was already reduced. BARGAIN!) and it is hot. If, like me, you think virus's are those bloody useless things that make winter a snot lottery, think again. This book will make you scared to go to the zoo or shake hands with veterinarians and give you new respect for Sunbeam frypans. In 1980 some French guy gets disgustingly sick on a plane:

"He is holding a sick bag over his mouth. He coughs a deep cough and regurgitates something into the bag. The bag swells up. Perhaps he glances around, and then you see that his lips are smeared with something slippery and red, mixed with black specks, as if he has been chewing coffee grounds. His eyes are the colour of rubies, and his face is an expressionless mass of bruises... The connective tissue in his face is dissolving."

If you are squeamish, like the lady I saw being assisted from the theatre at "Interview with a Vampire", then don't read **The Hot Zone**. The book is filled with narrative similar, and worse, to the above - so be warned. It is fascinating, though I was disappointed by the lack of real "meat" in the discussion of the Ebola and Marburg virus's. This is not *New Scientist*, more like *Who Weekly* I guess, but vastly entertaining to us ghouls.

As for **Interview with a Vampire** perhaps it was boredom that made the lady swoon. Anne Rice was right, the director achieved the near impossible, a faithful reproduction, an accurate translation of a novel to the screen. That's the major flaw, IMHO: as a good friend so accurately described the book and film, "Some guy gets bitten on the neck by a vampire and then spends the whole movie whining about it." Rice's books are bloody irritating, they should be called the Whingeing Vampire Chronicles. Brad Pitt was good, the little girl wasn't bad, Tom Cruise worked hard but was hopelessly miscast. The costumes and sets were outstanding. Armand Assante was fab. Glad I went on Cheap Tuesday.

More Blood. **Lovedeath** (Headline Feature, \$14.95) by Dan Simmons. "Good Ole Reliable". That's what we should call Dan. Or maybe "The Man with a Thousand Faces". This book is almost totally great, the exception being "Dying in Bangkok", a vampire/AIDS story that doesn't really work for me. Gross yes, readable yes, good no, like a lot of the splatterpunk stuff you see these days. The other stories though, are all gems. As usual Dan's genre spanning style almost defies belief. There's a great American Indian Fantasy, "Sleeping with Teeth Women" (Which attacks Costner's Dances with Wolves as being a patronising whitewash and an insult to the Sioux which should be cleansed with blood - Costner's. Dan is part Cheyenne and maintains the Indians would have killed Costner's character in the first reel because he was such a bloody loony), a cyberpunk tale as biting as Womack's in "Flashback" which also has things to say about JFK's assassination, and a couple of stories about love and loss: one involving insurance claims, the other The Great War Poets. If you go back a few issues you'll find an interview I did with Dan where he talks about this collection, reread that, its enlightening.

Not in the same league, not even playing the same game, we have **Synbat** (Coronet, \$14.95) by Bob Mayer. It carries a Special Forces Airborne patch on the spine, so Hey! it must be cool. Well its OK. Briefly, some badass prisoners escape, break into secret genetic research lab and accidentally free bio-engineered Synbats (Synthetic battle thingies) that kill them and lots of other

people before escaping to Chicago where they live in sewers etc. (obviously not very intelligent Synthetic Battle Thingies). Evil scientists, conniving politicians, dumb grunts, all the usual. Special Forces Chief Warrant Officer Dave Riley to the rescue! A very little bit like Soldier (pick a letter) meets Aliens. Disappointing for what it doesn't do as there is a lot of potential here. Check out next issue where we look at the Aliens novelisations, I think they'd be better value for money in the bug hunt department. Synbat is OK for filling time between real books, or for reading on public transport (Actually I like reading things like American Psycho on the bus. Try it - hold the book so that the person sitting next to you can read the page: watch them squirm. Get the seat to yourself on every trip - a Death Metal t-shirt and a goofy grin might help too).

Timothy Zahn has been around for a while. Somehow in that time I've managed to not read his work. Not a conscious decision. It just worked out that way. Some of you may know him from his Star Wars novelisations. I only know him as a writer of trad-minded SF. Anyway, Timmo has a new book **Conqueror's Pride** (Bantam Books, 11.95), probably the first in a new trilogy (It doesn't say trilogy on the cover but there's a cliff-hanger ending, a sequel called *Conqueror's Heritage* and a certain amount of

precedent in the market). All the snide bitching aside I liked this book a lot. It reminded me of the best Space Opera of the fifties and sixties, Poul Anderson's Flandry Series or his Poleso-technic League stuff (or even early Jack Vance - The Five Gold Bands for one), to which I am hopelessly addicted. Actually there is a vast body of work out there, oldies but goodies, begging to be read, if you can find it, or recognise its worth when you do. I can claim some small expertise since that is my main area of interest outside cyberpunk; the SF of the so-called Golden Age (anywhere from the 1930's through 1960's). If you want advice on what's hot and what's not drop me an e-mail or even a snail-mail. In the meantime grab Timmy's book, its full of good entertaining story telling - what they used to call good old-fashioned fun. Its what made America great dammit, just ask Wernher von Braun. Science Fiction for, by, and about engineers and soldiers. Women? Bah! Who needs 'em. Not us manly soldiering engineers! We've got planets to terraform and aliens to subjugate.

While you're waiting for Zahn to come out of his time-tunnel with the latest instalment why not try **Crusade** (Harper Collins again, \$19.95, and where's my damn kickback?) a "can't put the bloody thing down and get some sleep" sort of book. Its a history of the Gulf War and a damned good one. You'll find

out things you never knew, guaranteed. Regular readers know what a war junkie I am. Its a testosterone thing, a penis thing maybe, I dunno. Who out there can honestly say they don't like to read about cluster bombing and precision munitions? Or Tomahawk Cruise missiles and the interrogation of POW's. Jolly stuff and there should be more of it.

Too much hot sun. That's the excuse, disprove it, I dare ya. In the meantime keep the e-mail flying. Its been good to hear from you people. I for my part will contribute to more than my fair share of the destruction of this country's forests by buying more books to pile up next to my bed.

See ya later, Ron.

ALERT!

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...because they didn't get their copy of issue 21 or 22! So if anyone can help us locate **ANDREW POLI** (formerly of Bunbury, WA) or **YI LEE PHANG** (formerly of Strathfield, NSW) we'll be eternally grateful (read: we'll send you a FREE copy of the next issue of AusRealms # 23!).

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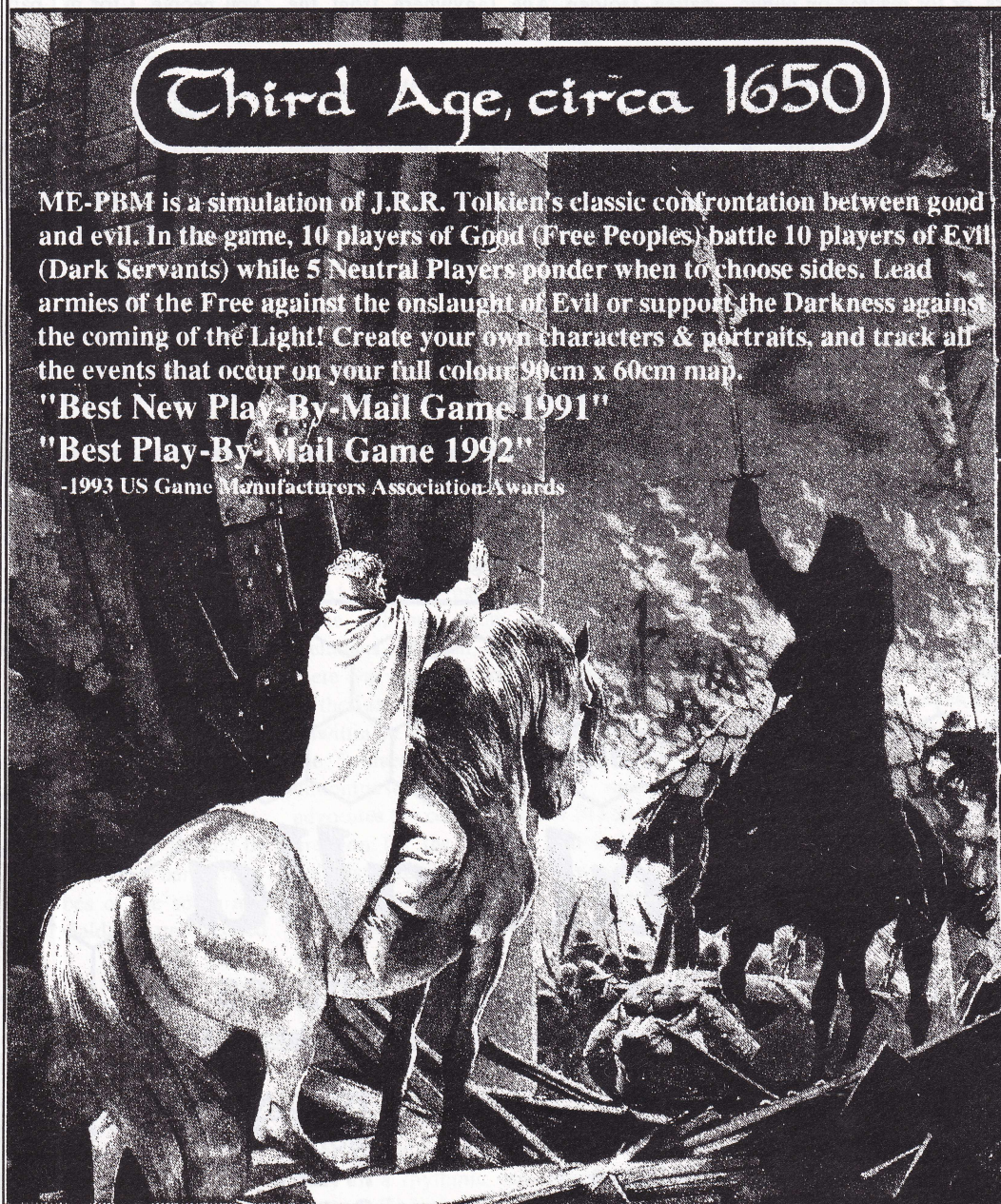
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Blank Frank

Messenger of Doom and Destruction NPC Hook for Mage: The Ascension

- by Scott English

*Blank Frank is the messenger ...
... of your doom and your destruction.
Yes he is the one who will set you up as nothing...
... Frank has a memory that's as cold as an iceberg.
Frank is a siren, he's the air raid, he's the greatest.
He's the menu on the table, ...
... he's the knife and he's the waiter.*

- Icehouse, "Blank Frank "

I pen these words for you in a story of ill. Indeed, it is my story. It begins, as it should, with me. A headstrong young Adept of Matter, I began flouting the Laws of Static Reality. I knew the risks. But I guess the temptation... the lure... was just too strong for my weak will. But I shall not dwell on my sins, it is my fall from grace that will be of grave interest you.

Most dabblers in the ways of Matter certainly know of a particular paradox spirit known as Blank Frank. His victims see Frank in his true form. Other Awakened beings can see Frank's true form on a Perception + Awareness roll (Difficulty 8). Unawakened beings will definitely be able to see Frank, but he will appear as a nondescript individual, quite the norm for the area that he is observed in. Those that have seen his true form describe him as being humanoid, and almost always wearing a suit of some nondescript type, and a distinct brown felt hat. Two outstanding features about Frank's true form are his blue skin, with a texture of clay, and his almost complete lack of facial features.

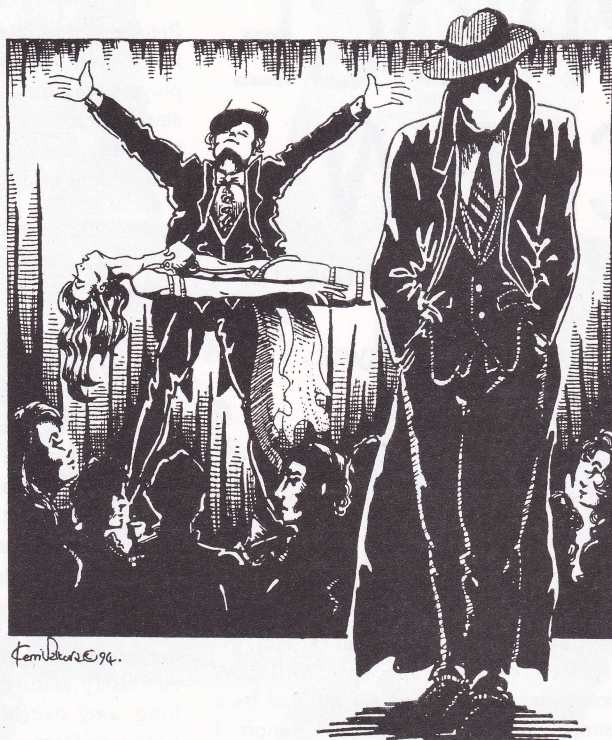
I remember the first time that I saw him. I was in the middle of one of my better "shows". My girlfriend... my ex-girlfriend, was part of that act. I was levitating her about 20 metres into the air. Suddenly I felt all of my strength drain away from me. She started falling, like some sort of rock or stone. The most shameful thing is that at that time I wasn't thinking about her safety, I was thinking about myself, and the twenty or thirty people who were watching my act go disastrously wrong. Then she came to a bone shattering halt, just before hitting the ground. She just hung there like a limp puppet. Someone went to her rescue, hell knows I couldn't force myself to move an inch.

They discovered her dead.

Hung on a fishing line attached to a pulley system. It was as someone had twisted my magick to make it conform with the laws of Static Reality, and then caused the whole thing to fail terribly. They called me a charlatan. A trickster. I knew something was seriously wrong. That's when I saw him.

And he tipped his hat to me...

Blank Frank operates in a manner that is quite different to many of the known paradox spirits. When a mage of Matter attracts Frank's attention by violating the Laws of Reality in a significant way, Frank will personally haunt the mage,



setting her up as a fake and a charlatan by countering all her magick and not only making it fail horribly, but also making it appear as though it was all some trick or prank. He will do this to all of the mage's magick, static and dynamic. This is Frank's way of evening out the balance - by creating a belief that the mage is a fake, completely destroying the mage's reputation, within both the Sleeper and Mage communities. Quite often if a Cabal or even other mages discover that she is being haunted by Blank Frank, they are likely to exile the mage, at least until the haunting stops, lest they become pawns in Frank's 'lessons' to the mage. Only when the mage has been taught her lesson about violating the laws of static reality, will Frank leave the mage alone.

... how my story ends. I have nothing left. Nothing at all. No friends. No money. I have been exiled by my colleagues, lest they become victims of my failed magick. Not that it matters. I haven't used any rites for months. I'm beginning to believe that I can't any more.

I haven't seen him for a while. Frank. The last time was about a week ago, while I was wandering through the streets. I saw him at the end of this alley. He tipped his hat to me, turned, and walked straight through a wall. I don't know if he's gone but I see his hat everywhere. On stranger's heads. In shop windows. And I always think of him. I think I've become a paraphobe, and I don't think I can go on this way.

Blank Frank (Matter 4 Paradox Spirit)

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2, Wits 5

Abilities: Alertness 5, Awareness 5

Knowledges: Cosmology 4

WillPower: 8

Arete: 4

Health Levels: OK, OK, OK, -1, -3, -4, -5, Banished

BRIDGE CREW

David Readman Examines the Computer Assisted Cooperative Multi-Player Science-Fiction RPG.

The Mission

My orders (given to me by the GM) were simple; take my starship, penetrate 20,000 TSU (Time Space Units) into enemy space, rendezvous with the merchant vessel the Liberty Bell carrying the spy 'Milligan', transport him on board and get out and back to friendly space alive! Why me? Simple. I was Captain Blaggard of the starship Bismark, a veteran of two tours of duty and one of the few survivors of the DMZ incident in 20002.192. The crews were a mix of experience and youth all trained and ready to die for our homeworld of 'Tracallas'.

Gathering the bridge crew together I briefed them on the mission, some said our toughest to date. Among the doubters was Nick Prossex our Beam Weapon Officer. As he rightly pointed out, 20,000 TSU is a long way and the enemy would have at his disposal the entire Rheman border fleet outnumbering us 5 to 1. Being the kind of captain that I am, I cut Nick off in mid sentence. It doesn't pay to have negative vibes. Kathy on Damage Control checked with the GM and noted that she had a few extra crew to allocate; that seemed to be the full extent of the good news.

Roger on Strategy informed me that our vessel was faster than any of the Rheman ships we might meet, so speed was one of our main weapons. Hardly news to a campaigner like me, but being the kind of person I am, I thanked him for his concern (and hopefully gained a few points for my good role-playing)

We decided that our best plan was to fool the enemy into thinking our steering systems were damaged and that, out of control, we were accidentally crossing the border. Then once across we would go to full speed and get a jump on the border patrol, fly hell for leather to our rendezvous and pick up the spy.

Then we got to the terminals and our mission got under way.

For those of you who have not played *Bridge Crew*, it is a multi-player computer moderated starship simulator where the players play the part of various members of a starship crew (a bit like *Star Trek* live role-playing but with a combat system reminiscent of *Star Fleet Battles*).

Our GM wanted a bit of espionage mood at this stage, so she turned the lights right down low and we really started to get into it.

After the usual period of setting the player security, my crew (comprising four role-players and myself) started on our dangerous mission. Nick decided he wanted more than just beam weapon control "Hang tight Kid," I said, "I need a full time shooter - this could be dangerous." It was a lie, but hell, if we gave him communication he would probably insult every starship we met.

Michael the Helm Officer made the deception of a damaged ship a reality by carelessly setting speed to 90 for a bit too long and overheating the warp engines. Kathy on Damage Control got repair crews in quickly, her hands blurring on the console with the confidence of a touch typist. It made me feel secure to know our fastest typist was on Damage Control.

Needless to say, a ship with a stuffed warp drive does a pretty realistic impersonation of a ship with a damaged steering system so we headed into the zone anyway. We gave the border outpost (identified as B1) the slip and were 5,000 TSU in before we intercepted its call for help. "Sucker," I thought.

Sometimes in space things can happen quickly, but all was quiet so I debated allowing some of the crew to stand down (hoping for a few role-play points) but thought better of it. It was just *too* quiet.

Roger on Strategy reported a contact bearing 467 range 9000. "Identify it," I ordered. "Sir, it's a Rheman Nightwing class," came the reply. "Damn," I cursed under my breath, aware that a vessel with cloaking (like the Nightwing class) could play sensor tag all the way to the rendezvous. "It's cloaked," said Roger in his usual unemotional voice.

Julie on Missiles, a veteran of six combat missions, was edgy about getting killed by a cloaked vessel in ambush. (It can be a fair blow to one's ego when a character you have been playing for a few months dies in any role-play game, *Bridge Crew* is no exception.) "Helm course 937, speed 80. We will try to outrun it," I barked, hoping a bit of evasive action would calm Julie down. (One thing you definitely don't need in *Bridge Crew* is crew panic. It might be good role-playing, but the crew efficiency can really suffer.)

"Message from M1 the Liberty Bell sir," said Julie (who was filling in for Roger on Comms) "I am being pursued by ship identified as R4, You'd better get here quick, or Milligan won't get the medical treatment he needs".

"Ah," I thought to myself, "that's the ruse for getting the spy off the ship," knowing full well that the Rhemans could confiscate the ship under the terms of the treaty if a spy was found on board. Medical emergencies could be beamed off. Good. (Unless he's really sick. Sh*t, we'd better hurry. If only Michael hadn't blown the engines.)

To make matters worse, Roger in monotone added "R4 is a Rheman Owl class vessel. It out-guns the merchant by a factor of about 10 to 1". I thought this would be tough, but to use transporters would require slowing and lowering our shields and we would be a sitting duck for R4. "How's the warp drive?" I asked Kathy. "Only 85% came the reply". It seemed to me that our best hope was to blast R4 to spacedust stop dead do the pick up and then get the heck out of there. From the comments of the crew they seemed to generally agree "Assign all crew to combat stations, lock all weapons to R4, load all missiles and charge all beam weapon systems!" I ordered.

On the main display, R4 was winking in and out like a Christmas tree light, a small rodent moving from cover to cover trying desperately to hide from the prying eyes of a cat. "Missiles fire at any suitable opportunity, since they are a stealth vessel use your own judgment" I was pretty sure she would anyway but it pays to be explicit.

Then things started to get real frantic. R4 opened up with plasma torpedoes while we were still out of range, so we went to full speed to close quick. Julie kept up a high rate of fire on missiles and the crash of plasma torpedo hits on our shields was sporadically broken by Nick's victorious shouts of "Got the bas***d, I mean beam hits, sir." After about four minutes of frantic combat, R4's crew had assumed the status of vacuum breathers. "Quick, lower those shields and get Milligan aboard," I ordered. Julie on Comms told the merchant to lower their shields and the Engineering Officer beamed Milligan aboard.

"Chief Medical Officer to the Transporter Room, let's check on his health to be safe." Fortunately, he was fit and well, though I'm sure Jones could fake something if need be.

"Okay, Helm, lay in a course for Tracallas and let's get out of here. Speed 80. Engage."

We managed to avoid further combat by use of excessive speed and zig-zagging. Half an hour later we were back in friendly space.

Another successful mission. I'll be recommending Deep Space Fleet Award medals to all combat crew. (Except Michael, after all, he did jeopardise the mission by damaging the warp engines.)

The above is a summary of a *Bridge Crew* mission played recently. I have changed the names to protect the innocent, and used a dash of artistic licence to convey the feeling of the game (and abbreviated wordy quotations). For registered owners of *Bridge Crew* the scenario is available from the BBS and is called RESCUE2.SAV.

What is Bridge Crew?

Bridge Crew is played with four or five IBM-compatible PC's linked by serial ports using null modem cables. The main PC screen that all players need to be able to see, reflects the starship's tactical display.

Like other role-play games, *Bridge Crew* is played with a gamemaster who develops a scenario for the players and will usually get involved during the playing of the scenario.

The players roll up characters just like in a tabletop role-play game. The players play the parts of the crew of a starship. Each player is a bridge officer in a universe moderated by the GM.

The typical roles are Captain, Beam Weapon Officer, Helm Officer, Missile Weapon Officer, Communications Officer, Security Officer, Computer Officer, Damage Control Officer, and others. Most players have more than one function, so things can get quite hectic during play.

How is it played?

Each player has a computer terminal with which he/she can pull up various reports about the state of the ship and universe. Players can also enter commands that relate to the player's assigned role (e.g. the Helm Officer sets the ship's course and speed).

Like the bridge of a modern warship, the Captain gives orders and expects the crew to either obey or make sensible alternative suggestions. The crew is expected to run their relevant parts of the ship without specific orders.

It can be played as a role-play game in its own right. It can also be used to assist GMs when arbitrating starship combat in games like *Traveller*, *GURPS Space* and other science fiction role-play games. While not designed as such, it is can also be used by war-gamers as an interesting alternative to boardgames like *Star Fleet Battles*.

What do you need?

To play you need an IBM-compatible machine with at least 1MB of memory and 3 MB of hard disk space. The machine must be a 33 MHz 386 or greater. The machine should have VGA graphics with a minimum of 512K video memory. Two additional IBM-compatibles PCs (XT, AT ...) and one or two dumb terminals or PCs (Macintosh, Amiga, and Atari ST machines may also be used as terminals with appropriate terminal, VT100, emulation software). Three or four Null modem cables to connect PCs to PCs, and terminals to PCs. You also require the *Bridge Crew* software and at least 3 players and a GM.

Where can you get it?

Bridge Crew was developed here in Australia and is regularly played by a small but devoted band of role-players (in Canberra, Melbourne and Perth). If you want to try before you buy, a low cost demonstration version is available. Otherwise you can go along to one of the many gaming conventions where Mithril Software run full-scale demonstrations of the game. Check the advertisement below for full details on how to get a hold of this exciting and fun role-playing accessory. ■

BRIDGE CREW

You Are The Captain of the ANZAC, an Amazon class starship. The mission is not going well !

Nearby your damage Control officer (another player) works frantically assigning damage control parties to repair your damaged vessel. The Alien vessel that attacked you closes in for the kill !

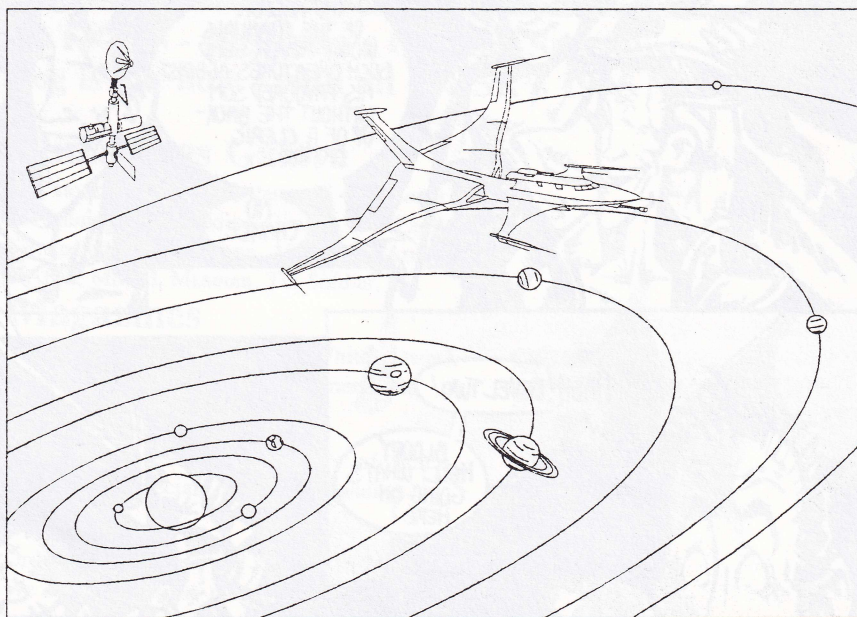
Sensors are only 60% functional, beam weapons won't charge and you are down to just four missiles. Crew casualties are high. Warp power is failing, left shields are down.

The next two seconds could make you (and the other 3 players) heroes or spacedust. Your bridge officers (the other players) await instructions.

You are playing BRIDGE CREW the affordable computer assisted roleplaying game in which four players become the bridge officers of a combat starship.



BRIDGE CREW is played on IBM compatible Personal Computers, one for each player and one for the Game Master, linked by serial ports.



For more information write to Mithril Software, PO BOX 225, Kippax, ACT 2615; or phone (06) 254-3198 between 6pm and 9pm weekdays, Fax (06) 254 6280

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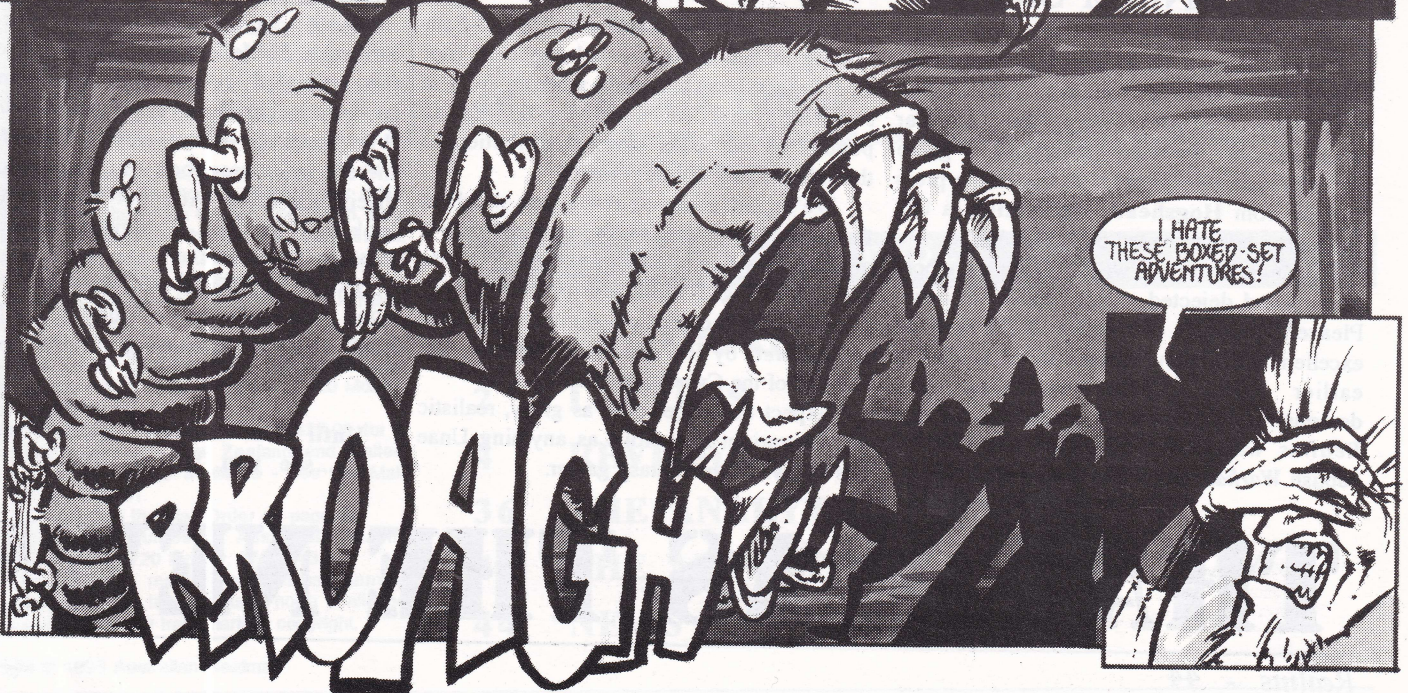
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THE ADVENTURES OF THE KATEEM

BY DANIELS

VIRGIL THE LAWFUL POMPOUS PALADIN WAS FACED WITH HIS GRAVEST CHALLENGE... IF ONLY THE SILLY SHINY IDIOT WOULD ACKNOWLEDGE IT!





Legends Card Give-Away Next Issue

Next issue we will be giving away FREE *Magic:The Gathering* cards with *Australian Realms*. Each copy of Issue 23 will come shrink-wrapped with a *Magic:The Gathering* card in foil wrap inserted. Included in this give-away will be a very generous swag of "Legends" cards - common, uncommon and rare (including the classic, Shivan Dragon).

Due to this exciting special offer, *Australian Realms* Issue 23 is sure to be a total sell-out. Remember that *Australian Realms* is available via subscription (see the special offer of a "Fallen Empires" booster pack in this issue's Mail Order form), and from all better hobby stores and newsagents.

Be sure to reserve your copy now!

Surfin' the Net

After consulting a leading neuro specialist, we have decided that Nick might have to be surgically removed from his modem. Our erstwhile Editor has spent much of the last few weeks jacked-in to the Internet, buzzing E-Mail addresses, haunting role-playing newsgroups and bulletin boards and espousing the virtues of *Australian Realms* to all and sundry with access to the Internet.

Nick's many hours drooling at his Mac at 2 am seems to have paid off though, with a number of exciting new contacts made and wads of information shared. We even found our first US subscriber through the 'net, who not only subscribed for the coming year, but bought every back issue SIGHT UNSEEN. Quincey Koziol - we salute you! That's the sort of dedication that brings a tear to the eye.

Chaos Never Sleeps

"On Monday 23rd January, Hogshead Publishing signed a contract with Games Workshop Ltd to bring the popular *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay*™ game (WFRP) back into print." - so began the press release from **Hogshead Publishing**, a UK publishing house headed by James Wallis.

We must admit that we at *Realms* were both pleased and dejected at this wonderful news. Pleased because we think WFRP is an excellent RPG, as our many support articles in earlier issues of this magazine have demonstrated. Dejected because *Australian Realms* was also bidding for the rights to publish *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay*!

Now you know why so many of our previously promised products have not yet put in an appearance, as *Realms* staffers were fully occupied in developing our bid for the WFRP licence. Although our bid was unsuccessful, we've already had preliminary discussions with James Wallis of **Hogshead**, with a view to offering our support and considerable talent pool of writers and artists for any upcoming releases. We'll keep you up to date with any forthcoming news as it happens.

Hogshead has plans to re-release a number of WFRP products throughout 1995, including the basic rule book and selected parts of the *Enemy Within* campaign, before releasing any new and original WFRP products. **Hogshead** also produces the scholarly games journal called *Interactive Fantasy* (reviewed this issue), and they have plans to publish their own *Bugtown RPG* later this year, based on the comics of Matt Howarth. We offer James, and everyone at **Hogshead Publishing** congratulations and best wishes for a great WFRP future.

Achtung Unae!

Speaking of commitment to the cause, **Anja Henkelmann**, one of our many faithful readers, recently contacted us on E-Mail and asked if she could run an Unae scenario or two at a German convention she would be attending in March this year. We were literally floored by her offer and quickly accepted, sending her copies of "The Forest", a Burvoy-based scenario from issue 8.

So, if you're in Hannover, Germany during March, why not drop in to "Hannover Spielt! 3" and join in on the first international Unae game.

SolSpace

For the past few months, we've had Paul Mitting locked up in a small cupboard (not an easy feat, I can tell you!), working away at something that we hope you'll find as popular as our other major contribution to the role-playing hobby - Unae.

We're not going to reveal too much at this stage, as we want to hit you *hard* when it arrives. What we *can* tell you though is that we're planning to bring you an entirely new *Cyberpunk*™ campaign setting, *officially sanctioned* by **R.Talsorian Games**, the creators of the *Cyberpunk*™ RPG.

Expect SolSpace to be as gritty, realistic and downright dangerous as anything Unae has thrown at the fantasy gamer.

Conventions.

Best wishes for all those involved with **Swancon '95**, held right here in Perth over the Easter weekend (14-17 April) and **Conquest '95** held at Melbourne University High School over the very same weekend. *Australian Realms* sponsored **Conquest '95** and recently **Ozcon '95** (held in Toowoomba, Queensland); if you are a convention organiser don't hesitate to contact us for support.

New Releases

Here are some of the more exciting releases scheduled for the next few months, gleaned from a few new catalogues that have arrived at the *Realms* offices.

R.Talsorian Games: Releases for *Castle Falkenstein* include a Referee's Guide, and American and New-European sourcebooks. Neotribes, Eurosource Plus, Generation Gap (referee's guide for *Cybergeneration*) and the ISA Sourcebook are releases for the *Cyberpunk/generation* line. *Mekton Z* releases include the Algol 1530 Sourcebook and the *Mekton Mecha Manual Vol 2*.

Chaosium: The Unmapped East, a background and adventure book for the *Elric!* game has been renamed as The Unknown East and should be in stores now. For the other Chaosium product lines, 1995 has *Wyrms' Footprints (Runequest)*, *Miskatonic U sourcebook (Call of Cthulhu)* and *Chronicle of the Awakenings (Nephilim)*.

Palladium: More from the pen of Kevin Siembieda and clan, with *Mystic China*, *Robotech New Order* and *Rifts: Phase World Sourcebook* all due for release this month.

FASA: March brings 1st Somerset Strikers a *BattleTech* sourcebook based on the animated series (not yet seen in Australia, sigh). A novel for *Shadowrun* is *Who Hunts the Hunter*, and for *Earthdawn* there's a sourcebook on the magical disciplines called *Adept's Way*. In April, look out for the *Shadowrun Corporate Security Handbook*.

TSR Inc: We're still waiting for the 1995 catalogue to hit our desks. We'll let you know about upcoming releases then.

Until next we avid gamers meet,
...see you 'round like a D100!

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